

RAVING
HYPERACTIVE

MIND SPIDERS

ONE PUNK'S GUIDE TO POETRY
THE KLITZ
STALINS OF SOUND
OTTAWA EXPLOSION
WEEKEND

#80 \$4



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DIY punk culture is often misrepresented, misunderstood, and the target of corporate exploitation. Razorcake supports a legit community of punk music and culture as the only bona fide 501(c)(3) non-profit music magazine in America.

Our open participation policy means anyone can become a contributor. Currently, Razorcake offers a forum for over 180 long-term independent volunteer writers, photographers, illustrators, and musicians from around the world. We take pride in our scenes and represent them internationally. We also distribute the magazine to over twenty countries.

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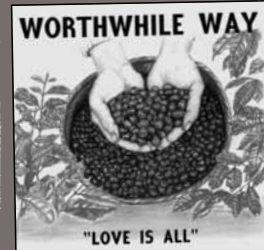
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A Ghost

In October of 2013, I decided to become a ghost.

What Razorcake does is all a matter of perspective and I regularly remind myself not to get delusional about it. We cover, foster, celebrate, and participate in DIY punk. My full-time "job" is helping keep the enterprise rolling. I, personally, strive to live and publish by example as much as by the printed word. What Razorcake does is rare and difficult (otherwise there'd be hundreds of non-profit national fanzines in America. There's one. You're holding it.). Yet, I joke with people that when something doesn't go exactly as planned that "no puppies died today." We don't deal with life and death situations on a daily basis.

Nearly twenty years ago I started my first novel. I turned in a three-hundred page version of it as my master's thesis in 1995. It was the longest thesis ever submitted to the English department. It was obvious to me that my advisor didn't bother reading past page twenty. I graduated. Shortly after, in 1996, I started working at *Flipside* fanzine.

I take DIY punk seriously because I find it invaluable. It's the best music in the world. It's a life tool box. It keeps me in contact with friends near and far. It's a reminder that the artificial separation between artist and audience is an arbitrary one based solely on a power relationship that I find harmful. DIY has helped me create something out of next-to-nothing for nearly twenty years with a whole lot of folks whom I consider friends.

When Razorcake first started out in January 2001, it was Sean Carswell and I in a preternaturally hot, cockroach- and termite-infested apartment. The first couple of hours of the day we worked on our own writing, then we'd get busy with Razorcake. Razorcake got busier and bigger. I kept plugging away at my novel. Binders filled up with chapters. Text filled floppy disks.

During all of this, I did my part by constantly interviewing bands. I reviewed well over a thousand records, books, and zines. I took ghostwriting jobs to pay my bills so I wouldn't be a shitbag deadbeat. I wrote two other books, both published on Gorsky. I helped keep Razorcake afloat day-to-day, which averaged between sixty and seventy hours a week that decade.

Ten years after Razorcake started, I had filled up twenty-two binders and had a nine-inch wide stack of paper filled with self-rejected drafts. It took me an entire year to read the 1,200 pages and put them in some sort of usable order. I deleted repetitions and sections that outright didn't make sense. It was depressing. The novel sucked. It was too long and it still didn't have an ending. I felt like a failure.

Then in early 2012, I started re-writing the entire novel. It took eighteen months. I was exhausted when I handed the 782-page manuscript over to my wife. She had both good and bad news. She liked it, but thought it could be better. She was right.

In October of 2013, I decided to become a ghost. For the first time since putting zines together, I stopped doing reviews. I hit pause on the Gorsky Press Story Podcasts. I put my own creative work higher in my priorities. To do this and not collapse or go crazy, I rarely go to shows so I can get up early to write. I say no to a lot of people I usually say yes to. I do it to continue writing the single-most difficult creative piece I've ever attempted. It's my albatross. It is tied around my neck. It stinks and it haunts me. I don't know how long it's going to take to finish. My best guess is the rest of 2014, at a bare minimum. I just know that I won't stop writing this time until it is.

I just hope it'll be good.

—Todd Taylor

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This issue is dedicated to the memories of Mike Atta, Scott Asheton, and Gabriel García Márquez

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**"Thank you for
printing JUICY
across your
asshole. We'll
avoid it."**

—Myriam Gurba,

"Disclaimer," from *Wish You Were Me*

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THANK YOU: After I say it, you'll won't be unable to un-see it, so I apologize in advance. It's not a schooner on the cover. It's a boob creating a vortex thanks to Kiyoshi Nakazawa for the cover illustration and for Peter Salisbury for the source photo; Oh screw you, robot love thanks to David Guthrie. It only took us ten years to use his illo. in Sean's column; Muppet cuttlefish thanks to Steve Larder for his illo. in Jim's column; Endless vegetarian bumper thanks to Eric Baskauskas for his sizzling illo. in Cassie's column; I do believe that Norb—ahem—would opt for a big hole 45 for the placement of the third record but I'm not his manager thanks to Alex Barrett for his illo.; Secondary market my ass. You're my life mascot thanks to Chloe Clayton for her Rhythm Chicken photo; Sorry, Nardwuar. We didn't use the direct scan of the ticket, but Mitch Clem and Nation Of Amanda made a dynamite piece of original art for your Sonics interview, part two; I almost went with "Eye Yi Yi!" for the title thanks to Jackie Rusted for her illo. in Dale's column; Consider for a moment how fucking shitty this could have turned out in lesser hands, both the text and the pictures. "One Punk's Guide to Poetry" is so not douchebag nor dildoe because Cheryl Klein rules and Marcos Siref is making a visual language all his own; Do not make jokes about Canadian stereotypes about them being so nice. Do not make jokes about Canadian stereotypes... see table of contents, video review subheader thanks to Jennifer Whiteford, Marc Gärtner, and Wells Tipley for the Ottawa Explosion weekend oral history, photos, and layout; We cut out the part where they complained about getting only one issue on their Flipside subscription thanks to Jeff Proctor, Paul Silver, and Matt Average for the *Stalins Of Sound* interview, photos, and layout; The band name could have been Not So Much Disorder And Not So Early Sex if Mark picked up another Fritz Leiber book thanks to Peter Salisbury, Renate Winter, and David Forcier for their *Mind Spider* photos; I'd watch Jeopardy! if the answer was, "The first punk band ever to play live in Memphis, Tennessee," some music journalist would answer "Jack White," and Alex Trebek would shake his head and say, "No, sorry. The Klitz" thanks to Ryan Leach, Ross Johnson, Alex Chilton, BullyRook, Steve Lacy, and Kay King for the interview and photos.

#80's rotation of music, zines, books, and video reviewers—reverse alphabetical order by first name: Vincent, Tim Brooks, Steve Adamyk, Simon Sotelo, Sean Koepenick, Sean Arenas, Sal Lucci, Ryan Nichols, Ryan Leach, Rich Cocksedge, Paul J. Comeau, Norb, Noah Wolf, MP Johnson, Mike Frame, Michael T. Fournier, Matt Werts, Matt Seward, Matt Average, Mark Twistworthy, The Lord Kveldulfr, Kurt Morris, Kristen K., Keith Rosson, Kayla Greet, Juan Espinosa, Jimmy Alvarado, Jim Joyce, Indiana Laub, Garrett Barnwell, Dave Williams, Dave Brainwreck, Craven Rock, Chris Terry, Chad Williams, Candice Tobin, Camylle Reynolds, Billups Allen, Bianca, Ashley, Art Ettinger, and Alanna Why.

If you're a woman who is knowledgeable about DIY punk, are good with deadlines, and are open to the editorial process, this is an invitation to drop us a line through the website about doing reviews, interviews, articles, or a webcolumn for Razorcake.



Free stuff! Free baby! Bummed! Give her the scissors to play with!
Genevieve August "Knives" McBride at Razorcake HQ

VIVA LA SILENT ERA!



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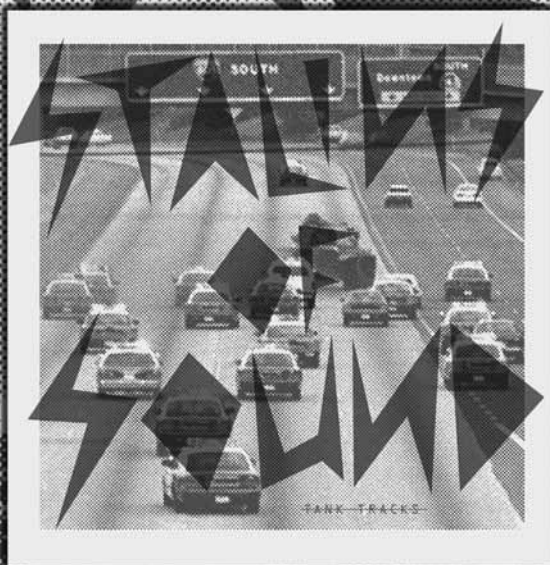
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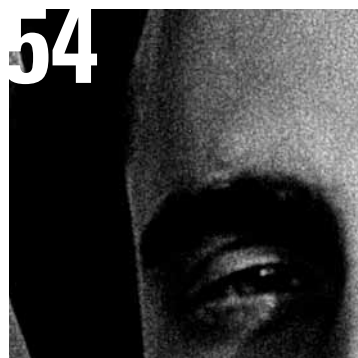
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The following folks stepped forward to help us do our part over the past two months. Without their help, Razorcake wouldn't be what it is: Todd Taylor, Daryl Gussin, Sean Carswell, Skinny Dan, Katy Spining, Candice Tobin, Kari Hamanaka, Matthew Hart, Donna Ramone, Phill Legault, Chris Baxter, Mary Clare Stevens, James Hernandez, Marty Ploy, Rene Navarro, Billy Kostka III, Derek "Jackfruit" Whipple, Andrew Wagher, Jason Willis, Janeth Galaviz, Rishbha Bhagi, Adrian Chi, Megan Pants, Alex Martinez, Jimmy Alvarado, Matt Average, Ever Velasquez, Joe Dana, Christina Zamora, Juan Espinosa, Meztli Hernandez, Sean Arenas, Aaron Kovacs, Nicole Macias, Yvonne Drazan, Julia Smut, Jenn Witte, Dave Eck, Chris Pepus, George Lopez, Tim Burkett, Jeff Proctor, Josh Rosa, Toby Tober, Sal Lucci, Johnny Volume, Jennifer Federico, Jennifer Whiteford, Kayla Greet, Arnold Benedict, Nighthawk, Marcos Siref, Steve Thueson, Evan Wolff, Cassie J. Sneider, Vadim Dozmorov, Ronnie Sullivan, Marcus Solomon, Bill Pinkel, Kurt Morris, Jason Armadillo, Laura Collins, Nation of Amanda, Eric Baskauskas, Vee Liu, Bianca Barragan, Cheryl Klein, Russ Van Cleave, Christine Arguello, Simon Sotelo, Susan Chung, Robert El Diablo, Bryan Static, Mitch Clem, John Miskelly, Jamie L. Rotante, Aimée Pijpers, Genesis Bautista, Andy Garcia, Ian Jones, Andy Higgins, Mike Huguenor, Caitlin Hoffman, and Chris Rager.

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Enriching Lives



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A MONKEY TO RIDE THE DOG

SEAN CARSWELL

“Those were dark days. The Reagan years.”

Constantly Risking Absurdity

Strangely enough, my first introduction to DIY culture wasn't punk rock. It was books.

I knew a little punk rock as a kid in Florida in the '80s. The Dead Kennedys' albums had made it into my little swampy hometown. I'd dubbed a couple of them onto cassette. I picked up some albums by the band right next to them in the cassette racks: the Dead Milkmen. I also knew the Ramones from watching *Rock'n'Roll High School* on late night TV. I had some of their stuff and some Clash. I'd watched *Another State of Mind* on that same program around the same time, but I couldn't find any Youth Brigade or Social Distortion at the record store and didn't know how to get my hands on it. When I talked to the kids with the mohawks about it, they tried to turn me on to Ministry and Skinny Puppy. Those were dark days. The Reagan years.

Making matters worse, I lived in a town where the primary employers were defense contractors. My family worked in the construction business. I started working on the job sites at a very early age. I didn't want to do that for the rest of my life. I thought it was better than the only other option: designing weapons by doing math equations in an air-conditioned cubicle. I was desperate for a third option.

Around that time, I came across a poetry anthology called *The New American Poetry*. The anthology was thirty years old by the time I got my hands on it, but it was still new to me. The “new” poets were the guys who were later labeled the Beat Generation: Gregory Corso, Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac. Their stuff made no sense to me but blew my mind anyway. What the fuck were these guys talking about? And why did it sound so cool?

I read those poems over and over again. Like song lyrics, lines got stuck in my head and meant more and more to me every time I thought about them. I noticed City Lights Books published all three poets and another poet in the collection, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, was the publisher at City Lights. I read his poems in the collection. They were my favorite of all.

As I looked more into Ferlinghetti, I learned that he'd been a working-class guy like me. He'd saved up some money and used it to start a bookstore and publishing house. He put out his friend's books and created a scene and promoted a counterculture in San Francisco before San Francisco became infested with hippies who ruined the word

counterculture. And the stuff they put out was great. Life-changing great. I thought to myself, here's the third choice. I don't have to work construction for my whole life or work for the defense industry. I can go somewhere else, find like-minded people, and we can do shit ourselves.

Not coincidentally, in my late twenties, I saved up a few thousand dollars from various construction jobs and used the money to start the publishing house Gorsky Press. A year after that, I took the rest of the money I'd saved—which was several thousand dollars—moved to Los Angeles, and helped start the publication you're reading right now.

When we were about ten books into Gorsky Press, I got a letter from Lawrence Ferlinghetti. The teenager inside of me got a little giddy when I saw it. I knew City Lights Bookstore carried all of our titles, usually ordering and selling at least a dozen copies of each. I thought maybe he'd read one of the books—maybe even ones I'd written—and have something nice to say. I thought maybe there was a club of badass indie publishers and he was welcoming me in. Or something like that.

But it was nothing like that. It was a cease and desist letter. It wasn't even addressed to me personally. It just said, “Dear Publisher.”

Part of me anticipated this letter.

Earlier that year, Gorsky Press had run a contest. Contestants could send in their manuscripts and a reading fee. The winning manuscript got a thousand dollars and publication. We'd done the contest because small presses are like small record labels. We mostly put out stuff by people we know and who are active enough in promoting themselves that they'll actually sell some books or records. The companies run somewhere between breaking even and losing a little money. If they slide into the category of losing a lot of money, they cease to exist. So we never took chances on the unsolicited manuscripts we got. The contest was a way to take a chance on one of those manuscripts without losing a lot.

The winner turned out to be a guy named Bucky Sinister. I was a little hesitant to publish Bucky. I'd met him briefly at a Last Gasp party at La Luz de Jesus in L.A. He was a big, intense, tatted-up dude who, as soon as a mutual friend introduced us, said to me, “You should publish my book of poetry.”

Experience up to that point had told me that I should never publish books of poetry by intense dudes who start a conversation saying that I need to put out their book. I thought to myself, of course I won't put out your book. I told Bucky, “You should submit it to our contest.”

Bucky thought—and later told me—fuck this pretentious twat and his fucking contest. What he said was, “Yeah. Maybe I will.”

Well, he did submit and his book was the best submission. The contest wasn't even close. Bucky's collection blew the doors off every other book. It was, in fact, exactly the kind of book I'd started Gorsky to publish. So we got to work putting out the book.

Once I got to know Bucky a little, he turned out to be a great guy. Much later, I heard Bucky being interviewed about his alcoholism. He said that he'd hit dead rock bottom and the only way he could pull himself up was by writing poems. He set to work on a collection, thinking that this was what would save him, pull him up from the gutter, get him to quit his slow line suicide. And it worked. He found a publisher, got the book out, and started to feel like a part of the world again. While I was listening to that interview, I realized that I was the one who published that book. I felt lucky that I had the opportunity to do that. I felt lucky that someone would pour that much into a book and trust me to put it out into the world.

This book was called *Whiskey & Robots*. It was, of course, the book that I got the cease and desist letter on.

It came about because of the one hiccup in the publishing process: the cover design. I'd enlisted a tattoo artist and member of the Razorcake army, Dave Guthrie, to illustrate the cover. He drew an amazing picture of a crying robot. I loved it and put together a slick cover design using it. Bucky did not like it at all. Instead of just saying so, he had a friend of his slap together a cover design that looked like a whiskey label. I wasn't about to go with that. We had to find a compromise.

One afternoon, I happened to be thinking about City Lights and San Francisco poets—of which Bucky is one—and my favorite books as a teenager. I played around with a different cover idea. It was an homage to the old City Lights pocket books. I had a copy of Ferlinghetti's *Pictures of a Gone World* on my desk. I had a ruler on my desk. I played with elements of the City Lights cover and

What the fuck were these guys talking about?

And why did it sound so cool?



DAVID GUTHRIE

elements of my own invention. I didn't genuinely intend to use this cover. I was just goofing off. But Bucky loved it and I liked the idea of paying homage to one of my old heroes, so we went with it.

I have to admit that, at the time, I didn't realize that City Lights was still putting out their pocket poetry series. All of the pocket poetry books on City Lights that I'd read had come from the '50s and '60s. The most recent I could remember was by Robert Bly and it had been published before I was born. I thought the series was a relic of the past and my homage was sentimental. I should have done a little more research.

Ferlinghetti didn't see my cover as an homage at all. He was nice about it, though. His letter said that the cover was "the great compliment of imitation" and that this "imitation may or may not involve copyright infringement." Nowhere in the letter did Ferlinghetti mention the word "lawsuit," but he did mention that City Lights was "reluctant to pursue such remedies." He also gave me a

phone number to call and work things out.

I called him up. Why not? If he was cool, I'd get to meet him. If he was a dick, I'd get a good story.

What, or more specifically who, I got was Nancy Peters, the day-to-day publisher at City Lights. At first, she was a bit of a bulldog. Both she and Ferlinghetti were pissed that I'd done this cover. I talked to her for a bit, though, and she calmed down. She told me that City Lights was fine with us selling through our current print run with the current cover. She only asked that, if we printed future editions, we put a new cover on it.

Fair enough.

By the time *Whiskey & Robots* sold out, Bucky had a new collection ready. It was called *All Blacked Out & Nowhere To Go*. We put all the poems from the first collection in the back of the second collection. I made a new cover. It was much cooler.

A few years later, I tried to interview Ferlinghetti for *Razorcake*. His assistant wrote

back a nice letter saying that he no longer granted interviews. He was in his nineties and focusing on writing a new collection of poems. He didn't want to be distracted.

I doubted he was really writing another book at the age of ninety-three, but he was. About a year and a half ago, his book *Time of Useful Consciousness* came out. I picked it up and read it. It's a motherfucker. Brilliant. He's now ninety-five. Hopefully, he's still writing.

I don't want to sum up all I got from Ferlinghetti (beyond the letter) into a neat conclusion here. That just seems cheap. But, here, in my eightieth column for *Razorcake*, I wanted to take a little time to think about ol' Ferlinghetti and some of the things he's shown me.

—Sean Carswell



LAZY MICK

JIM RULAND

"I feel an Allen Ginsburg moment coming on."

Virginia Is for Haters

A tribute to GWAR, the best thing that ever crawled out of the commonwealth.

1.

It's 1984 and I'm with my father on a visit to his office in the Pentagon. I got the same institutional feel of military hospitals and commissaries and post exchanges that I've been going to all my life. Wide, waxed passageways that go on forever. Small, dinky offices with gun metal desks and racks of thick black binders full of acronyms. He takes me to the parade grounds at the heart of the Pentagon, a place for stiff, joyless ceremonies where honors are bestowed and memorials performed. In the center of this little park sits a small kiosk, a concession stand that serves aluminum-wrapped hot dogs and hamburgers, bags of potato chips, and fountain drinks served in paper cups. My father tells me they call this place ground zero. He invites me to reflect on the tens of thousands of nuclear missiles primed and poised to launch their warheads directly at us, enough firepower to wipe Washington D.C. off the face of the earth forever, aimed at a hot dog stand.

2.

I go a Catholic prep school in Arlington, Virginia. My classmates are the sons and daughters of military officers and politicians, consultants and strategists for the cold war machine. My first girlfriend, the girl I lose my virginity to, lives in McLean and her dad is an Air Force vet who does contracting for the Department of Defense. My father plays poker with the Secretary of the Navy and my best friend's father works for the embassy. Or something. I have to work very hard to find someone to smoke weed with me after school. My friend's father is always traveling, but we never know when he'll come home so there's an element of paranoia as we do nitrous and rip bong and suck down wine coolers as if they were Capri Suns. My friend's father majored in southeast Asian history and spoke several languages of the region, yet claimed to have been stationed at a post office in Germany during the conflict with Vietnam. One day after school, my friend confronts him. "Why don't you just admit it, dad? I know you're in the CIA." My friend's father sets down his drink and loosens his necktie. "How long have you known?"

3.

When I get out of the Navy, I go back to Virginia for the in-state tuition. The only college that will take me is a party school

in the southwest corner of the state. It's closer to Kentucky, West Virginia, or North Carolina than to the capitol in Richmond. Appalachia. I move into an apartment with my brother down by the New River. One of the oldest, northward flowing rivers in the world. Second only to the Nile. The shores of the river are home to rats and bats and a freakish looking albino skunk the size of a Rottweiler. On my first day at school I get in a fight with the upstairs neighbor because he keeps referring to the remote control for his television as "the nigger."

4.

My first year at the party school, I take a class in Appalachian studies. I read Appalachia poetry and learn about scrapple and moonshine. Sometimes I hang out in the student union and argue with the born again students brainlessly proselytizing for their make-believe God. At first they smile through their condescension and drawl their platitudes, but after fifteen or twenty minutes with me they decide they don't care for my tone and storm off flustered and discombobulated. For my final project I write a paper about Pentecostal worship services that includes profiles of local pastors who drank strychnine and handled serpents, all deceased.

5.

I date a former cheerleader who works at the rape crisis center. She's trained as a counselor, but she's not very good at it. She doesn't know how to deal with the terrible things her clients tell her. She tells me everything; I tell no one. The stories she tells me are like white, hot magnesium that burns a hole in every compartment I try to store them in, but its no use: the fire is too hot and too bright to ignore. For years, every time I go into a dark stairwell or wait for an elevator door to slide open, I imagine I'll find a woman beaten into submission and bleeding from every orifice waiting for me on the other side.

6.

The GI bill covers my tuition and books but to make rent I work the midnight shift at Hardee's as a line cook. I work the grill, frying up hamburger and sausage patties, bacon and eggs. I work with a guy named Bobby, an ex-con who went to jail for beating his wife, who works as a cashier. The

drive-thru guy sells speed, weed, and LSD to his customers through the window and sometimes to his co-workers. Sometimes the assistant manager fucks one of the cashiers in the storeroom and Bobby gets real quiet. Sometimes he does too much speed and gets freaked out by the alarms on the fryer. Our store is number two in the state in after-midnight sales. We are busier from midnight to two AM than any other time during the day. They line up for sausage biscuits, bacon biscuits, egg and cheese biscuits, biscuits and gravy. The biscuit maker is a haunted woman who comes to work with black eyes and never talks and never smiles. I believe in my heart that she is in contact with evil. If I ride my bike to work, a freckle-faced cop who used to be the dogcatcher will stop me for riding without a light and make me walk my bike. If I put a light on my bike, it will be stolen. If I walk to work, a pick-up truck full of townies will call me a faggot and throw beer cans at me. If I see the cop or the townies in line at the store, I'll point them out to Bobby and he will do unspeakable things to their biscuits. One night, a charter bus full of black basketball players pulls up just as the crew from the county speedway arrives. The athletes come in one door and the rednecks come in the other. It's the first time I have to use a mop and a bucket to clean up the blood, but it isn't the last.

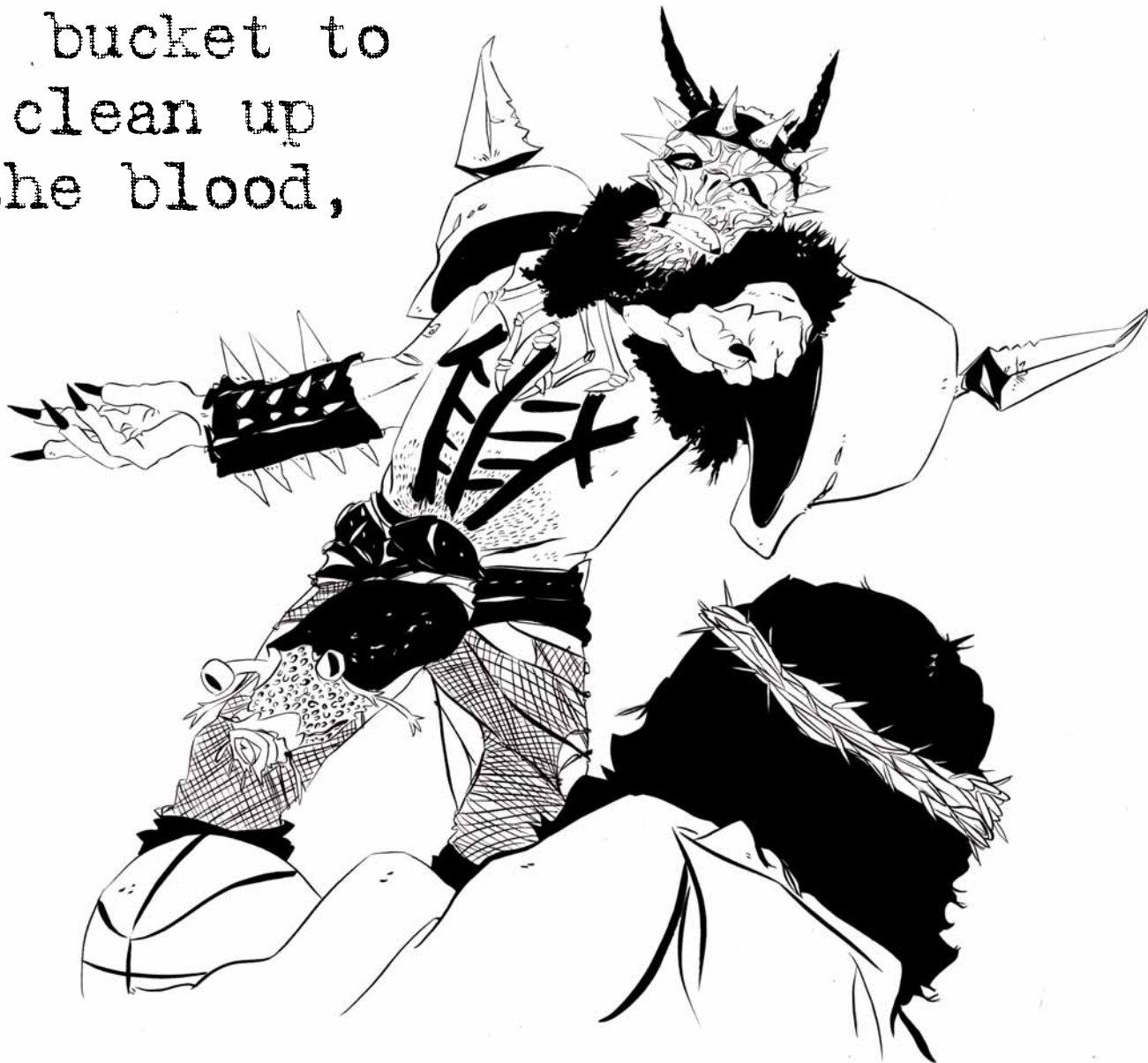
7.

I take acid at my graduation ceremony. It is a sunny day, the sky is relentlessly blue. I sit in a white folding chair on a green lawn and think real hard about my future. The class president talks about all the opportunities we have for making the world a better place while the second largest city in the country is on fire. I feel an Allen Ginsburg moment coming on. I want to stand on my chair and shout, "Cities are burning in the American night!" to the biscuit eaters whose foreheads are already starting to redden and peel and split open in the sun. I focus on the weather vane, swinging this way and that, a metaphor for my uncertain future. When this is over, I have no idea where I'll go, what I'll do, all I know is I'm getting the fuck out of Virginia.

8.

This is the part of the world that produced GWAR. Not New York or Los Angeles or San Francisco, but Richmond, the capital of the

It's the first time
I have to use a mop and a
bucket to
clean up
the blood,



STEVE LARDER

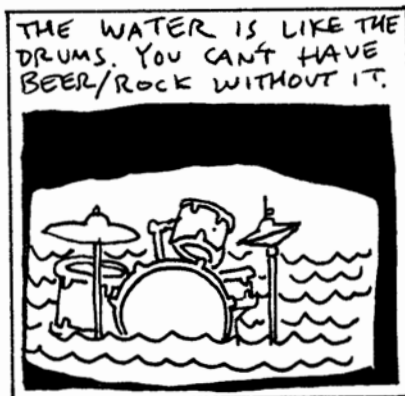
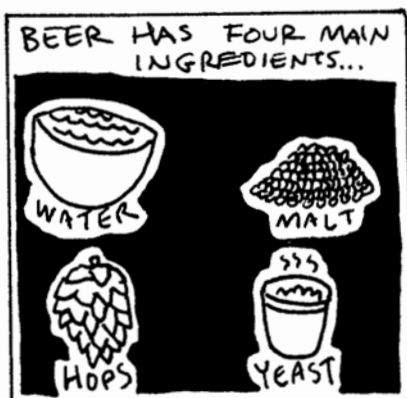
but it isn't the last.

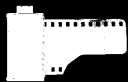
Commonwealth of Virginia and former capitol of the Confederacy. Richmond was famous for its penitentiary that sat in the middle of downtown, its open-air drug markets, and its homeless camps by the river. GWAR was never my favorite band, but they marked me. They marked everybody, but for me their high-concept, lowbrow, in-your-face performances were more than spectacles of bad taste, they were heroic. They were confrontational. You were either for them or against them. They were bastions of indecency. Champions of the

crass and the crude. They were dependably offensive in a place where such things still mattered to the small-minded citizenry. That GWAR came from a place that rejected everything that didn't kowtow to conformity is nothing short of remarkable. A southern Christian conservative city in a milquetoast middle Atlantic state whose northern frontier was the seat of power for the crypto-intelligence community, the consultancy class, the political hacks with beltway ambitions and the black heart of the military industrialization

complex. Beholden to no one, GWAR blazed their own trail. GWAR didn't just break the rules, they refused to acknowledge that rules even existed, and by doing so they created a code for their tight community of art school freaks and extra-terrestrial head bangers, and anyone with the balls to step out of line and stay out of line was welcome. R.I.P. Dave Brockie. You will be missed.

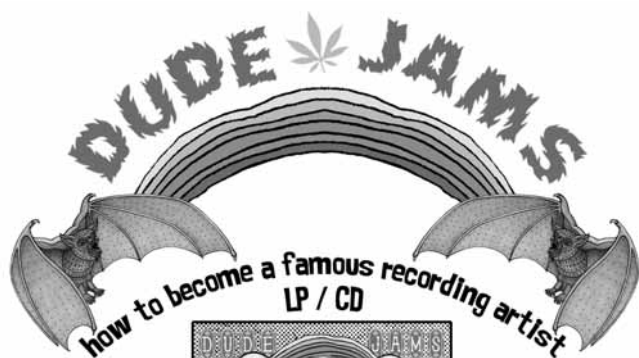
—Jim Ruland





Shanty Cheryl's Photo Page

Mike Watt recording at Clown Sound, San Pedro, CA



dan padilla "no corporate pizza" picture disc
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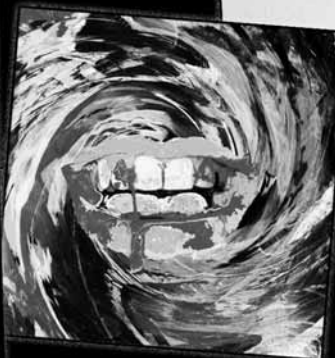
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Rachel Framingheddu's Photo Page

Kim Gordon and Jutta Koether, Mike Kelley opening at MOCA, March 30, 2014



“Two hours later, Jackie Martling handed me a hamburger.”

Joke Man

Colin's station wagon cut through the fog above the bridge leading to the strip of quaint beach mansions.

“Is this a private island?”

Nerf Herder played so loud the windows vibrated. We whizzed past ceramic lighthouses and lawn jockeys. Chimes hung from every tree, spinning in the wind as the song “Nosering Girl” shook the fuzzy red dice dangling from the rearview. “I think it’s an isthmus or something. Like, a land bridge.”

“Why does Jackie Martling live on a private isthmus?” It was weird to me that a comedian from The Howard Stern Show would live in such a secluded community. Wouldn’t the dick and fart jokes run dry if you were no longer roughing it with the unwashed masses?

Colin turned onto a dirt road. “How the hell would I know?”

“I don’t know. I’m hungry. Can we get Taco Bell after this?” In my early twenties, my lack of awareness when it came to my body or the things I put into it was astounding. The Grade D bean product of Taco Bell was a viable vegetarian option, and I routinely ran out the door without eating or drinking anything, shocked to find myself in a hunger rage not long after leaving the house. This was one of those days, and I doubted Jackie Martling’s isthmus allowed for even a bag of 7-Eleven gummy worms.

I didn’t know much about Jackie Martling, aside from what I had heard on the radio or seen flipping through record store dollar bins. In the 80s, he did a call-in joke service, the very concept was so dated it seemed made up. Most of his jokes were the ones a weird uncle tells you during a funeral, where an inanimate object yells something like, “I’m a FRAYED KNOT!” or “I’m a FUN GUY!” I guess there was credit to be had there, at a time when there was no internet and comedy meant wearing a blazer with the sleeves rolled up, standing against a brick wall under a spotlight, telling ice-breaker jokes about rabbis and priests for married couples on date night. It didn’t seem like anything Colin and I did would ever net us the success of isthmus beach house living, that was for sure.

Colin turned down a narrow road along the shoreline. I counted down the house numbers until we got there.

Jackie Martling’s front yard was covered in weathered buoys, hundreds of them where there should have been a lawn. I was no expert on anything, but having a beach-

themed beach house when your neighbors had normal yards seemed like the rich person equivalent of being the guy in the Metallica shirt at the Metallica concert.

“Is this seriously his house? It looks like a killing field of beach warts.”

Colin shrugged and we stepped out of the car. A lanky middle-aged guy in beige cargo shorts walked down the driveway.

“I’m Steve. You must be Colin.”

Colin reached out his hand. “Yes, hey. We met briefly at the thing at the college.”

The thing at the college was the reason we were there in the first place. Colin filmed a set Jackie did for an auditorium full of old people at his school, and Jackie asked him about compiling old performances onto DVD. We followed Steve to an even smaller beach house and took off our shoes at the door. From the glass enclosure of the porch, we saw that most of the neighboring homes had even tinier houses in their yards, like Russian nesting dolls.

Inside, there was a leather couch, an enormous television, and rustic decorations that looked like they were from SkyMall. Running along the perimeter of the ceiling was a shelf housing hundreds of hand-labeled VHS tapes: GOVERNOR’S 5/12/86. TV APPEARANCES 1991. LAFF 97.

“Jackie stepped out for a minute, but we were hoping you’d be able to take a look at the entertainment center.”

I sat on the couch and Colin tossed me the DVD of Jackie’s most recent performance. “What seems to be the problem?”

“Jackie needs you to hook up the television to his computer. Jackie was hoping there would be a way of doing that.” The way Steve referred to Jackie started to freak me out. It was how someone talks about their alien leader in a sci-fi movie.

Colin got on his knees and rooted around in the mess of wires. I leaned into the leather couch, sticky like a bus seat and listened to the sounds of my stomach telling me how hungry I was.

**

It’s difficult to explain to young people what true boredom is and equally hard for them to imagine a world before cell phones, where in waiting rooms, you thumbed through whatever thousand-year-old copy of *Model Railroader* was laying around. On public transit, you hoped your Discman wouldn’t skip and nobody would bother

to you. On the way home from work, you wondered if that weird guy you gave your number to at the VFW hall show would leave an equally weird message on your parent’s answering machine.

At Jackie Martling’s house, I was truly bored. Prison bored. Colonial settler bored. I listened to the air conditioner hum in the window. I watched Colin do his best to relate to Steve, and Steve, looking toward the door, listened for the sound of tires in a driveway, like a man in his forties doing an impression of a cocker spaniel. I tried to piece together in my mind what Steve’s life was like in his role as houseboy. It seemed bleak, to be the assistant of someone quickly becoming irrelevant in a changing world. What would happen to Steve if Jackie could no longer afford to keep him around? Was there a retirement plan for the Smithers of the world, a 401k where all the yes-men of the wealthy chipped in and eventually got to live in an MTV reality-show-style mansion, marinating in a heart-shaped hot tub with other pale, agreeable white men?

Minutes turned to three hours. At one point, Steve left to attend to something in the Big Beach House. I was so hungry I couldn’t communicate without sounding angry.

“What the hell are we doing here?” I hissed at Colin, who was bundling cable for no apparent reason.

“I have no idea anymore,” he said.

Desperation gripped my voice. “I thought we were just dropping off a DVD and getting tacos!”

Colin shrugged. “I guess we’re waiting for Jackie? I’m not sure. But if this leads to an actual job, we can buy that minibus.” Colin and I passed a minibus on the side of the road. The sign said “BUS: \$600” in what looked like the handwriting of a child. We weren’t quite sure what we were going to do with it, but Family Band seemed like the most viable option.

“No minibus is worth being a houseboy’s houseboy. Do you see Steve? He is *dead inside*, man!” With that, Steve walked in with Jackie Martling.

“Jackie, you remember Colin,” Steve said, gesturing to Colin seated on the floor, and they shook hands. “And this is...I’m sorry. What was your name again?”

I was so furious I was shaking. “Cassie. My name is Cassie.”

“This is Colin’s little friend Cassie.” Steve nodded at me and I thought I might explode. I imagined my guts raining all over



ERIC BASKAUSKAS

...like a man in his forties doing an impression of a cocker spaniel.

the room and then Steve, with unflappable loyalty, going for the wet wipes to clean off Jackie.

Colin tried to get the ball rolling with actual conversation. "Um, so I rewired your entertainment center to your computer. I could show you how to use the remotes if you want, but we were just dropping off this DVD and hoping to hit the road and get lunch."

Jackie's face lit up. "Great, then you can stay for the barbecue!"

Colin looked at me. I looked back at him, channeling all the hunger, boredom, and raw human emotion that goes along with them.

"Okay, then. I guess we'll stay!"

**

Two hours later, Jackie Martling handed me a hamburger.

"Uh, no thank you." I was starving, but I didn't eat meat. I had said so earlier when sausage and hamburgers were laid on the grill, but my voice was lost to the quaint, excessive chiming of stuff in the trees.

"Whaddaya, some kind of vegetarian or something?" Jackie said. Joining us on the lanai was Randy Jackson from Zebra, Jackie's ex-wife, and her new boyfriend. It

was like being on Local Celebrity Rehab, minus Rosie O'Donnell and Billy Joel.

"Yeah. Since I was eleven," I replied, trying to seem casual though I was so hungry I was sweating.

Jackie handed my hamburger to Randy Jackson and flipped another onto a bun for Colin. "What does a vegetarian worm eat?"

"I don't know," I said.

"LINDA MCCARTNEY!"

There was one Easter when a crackhead came to our door selling fake magazine subscriptions. I answered, glad to be away from the silence of my family's togetherness, and my mom came to the door and said, "Jesus Christ, we don't want any. Can't you see we're having a nice dinner?" After she slammed the door, it occurred to her that it might have been the *actual* Jesus Christ testing her and spent the rest of the day chain-smoking in the garage.

Now, with no food in my stomach, staring at more shitty ponytails than a Warcraft meet-up, I wondered if I was being tested. I had already been judged for not eating meat and forced to endure the tasteless jokes and cackling laughter of the most insufferable person I had ever met. Maybe this was my Jesus moment where there would only be one set of footprints in the sand. Or maybe

this was my breaking point, when I was fully saturated with pointless anecdotes about Blue Öyster Cult and I would take off running down the beach, with or without Colin.

"I—I have to go home," I said. "Colin, I just have to go home."

**

Steve showed us out. "Jackie may ask for you to come back and rewire the living room."

I was already in the car. I watched Colin nod, and they shook hands. Then Steve made the long walk through the buoys and around back, where meat sizzled, wind blew through the gnarled trees, and an old comedian laughed at his own jokes, oblivious to the six hours of my young life wasted in his presence. Colin got in the car and buckled his seatbelt.

"Did he pay you?" I asked.

"Nope," he yelled over the stereo. Nerf Herder was playing right where we left off. "You wanna get Taco Bell?"

"Yes. And I'm never talking to you again," I yelled back, but I didn't mean it. I almost never do.

—Cassie J. Snider



AMERICAN GRILLED CHEESE REVIEW

REV. NØRB

**“i hereby present,
for your
edification and
bedification...”**

HOORAY, HOORAY, IT'S RECORD STORE DAY!

Three-way-Fast-Motion screwing to the Lone Ranger Theme Starts Today!

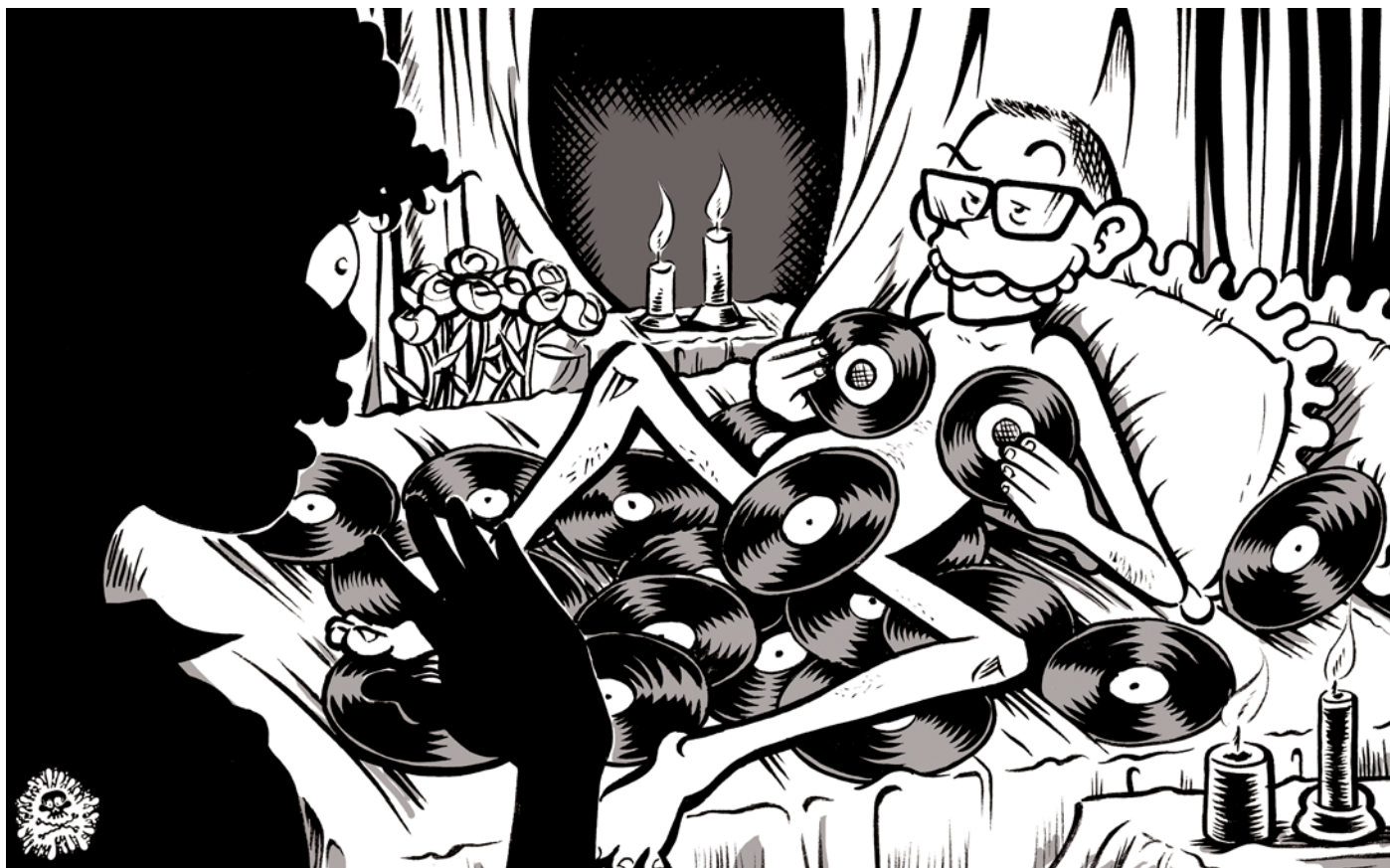
Record Store Day™! Observed on the third Saturday of April, it's second only to Free Comic Book Day™ in terms of its importance as an American holiday! **Record Store Day™!** The unwashed masses flock to whatever brick-and-mortar prerecorded musical entertainment emporium still remains in their neck of the woods, dumping dutiful ass-loads of cash on pre-fabricated “collector’s items” without which, they suddenly discover, they cannot endure! **Record Store Day™!** Sure, it's got a certain manufactured feel to it ((not quite as phony-baloney as Sweetest Day™ or anything, but not quite as organically legitimate as other American holidays, like... uh... um... okay, never mind)), but it is what it is, and it's usually as good an excuse as any for me to go down to Ye Olde Record Shoppe and play Archies records at confused shoppers for two hours! But THIS Record Store Day™ is special! THIS Record Store Day™ is unique! THIS RECORD STORE DAY™ WILL BE THE HIGH POINT OF SYNTHETIC AMERICAN PSEUDO-CULTURE ((more or less)), because THIS Record Store Day™ *I'M ACTUALLY ON ONE OF THE SUPER-SPECIAL LIMITED EDITION RECORD STORE DAY™ RELEASES!* That's right! *Not a dream! Not a hoax! Not an Imaginary Story!* For reasons not entirely clear to me, Milwaukee's Beer City Records has taken it upon themselves to re-issue the first and only record by my first band—the suave and subtle stylings of Suburban Mutilation's *The Opera Ain't Over Til the Fat Lady Sings* album—on some kinda fancy colored vinyl, for Record Store Day™ 2014. They're calling it a “limited edition” because they're only pressing a thousand. I pressed up a thousand of the goddamn things in 1984, and it took me until the mid-'90s to get rid of them all, so i'm not exactly sure how an eleven-year supply of something qualifies as limited, but whom the fuck am i to question the inscrutable cultural institution that is Record Store Day™? So yes: Record Store Day™ 2014 will feature limited edition releases by Dean Martin, Joan Baez, the Grateful Dead... and an album recorded for eighty six dollars ((plus twenty-five for the tape and another twenty-five bucks to have the guy put the leader tape between the songs, \$136 total. Nothing's too good for Record Store Day™!)) in some guy's basement. Works for me, i guess, but, again, i have mixed feelings about Record Store Day™'s vast effusion

of so-called collector's items—like, how exactly does it work where the guys who run the record store in the dingy old storefront on the side street go out of business because they can't sell enough four dollar used copies of Lou Reed's *Transformer* album to keep the lights on, but if someone reissues the record for Record Store Day™, consumers will flock to the stores and dump \$18.99 on it? How is that actually part of the solution and not part of the problem? I mean, i have no interest in biting the hand that spins me or anything, but i just don't think a bunch of manufactured hoopla over pre-fab “collector's items” is the long-term solution Earth's record stores need to their 21st Century woes. No, my gloopy droogies, for the balm in Gilead that will lead record stores back to the pink of health, reinstating them to the lofty position in contemporary Earth culture that they so richly deserve, i suggest ((demand, actually)) you look no further than *A Clockwork Orange* for inspiration. Alexander DeLodge strolls down to the record store, and what does he come back with? Limited edition colored vinyl reissues of thirty-year-old punk records? NO! Commemorative bumper stickers and turntable mats? NO! Independent music magazines with large, bipedal chickens as contributing writers? NO! Alex goes to the record store alone... AND COMES BACK WITH TWO GIRLS!!! THEY FUCK IN FAST-MOTION TO THE WILLIAM TELL OVERTURE!!! *Fuck limited edition colored vinyl reissues! Fuck commemorative turntable mats! THREESOMES!!! THREESOMES ARE THE ANSWER!!!* The record store has long been a repository of mankind's potential hopes and dreams and ambitions. We go there in the hopes that we find something that somehow uncorks our passions and our pent-up frustrations and our unspeakable neurological whatzits and rockets us to a state of pure psychic explosion and infinite grace! We go to the record store because we're looking for KICKS and THRILLS and EXCITEMENT!!! We go there because we're looking for ACTION! ACTION!! ACTION!!! Then we come home and sit on our crummy old couches and play our records and jerk off. Well, god DAMMIT man, **WHERE'S THE ACTION IN THAT???** Record stores need to bring back the PASSION! The PERVERSION! The TWO-GIRLS-FOR-EVERY-BOY and all like that ((hey, if it's good enough for Jan & Dean and Malcolm McDowell, it's good

enough for me!)) ((and what was his next movie after *Clockwork Orange*? *Caligula*? In *that* one, he butt-rapes Proculus *and* his bride on their wedding day. Malcolm McDowell is all *about* the threesome, boyee!!!)) Now, i will freely admit, picking up two girls at the record store is more easily said than done. i can't remember even picking up *one* girl at a record store, let alone two ((it doesn't help matters that the cool girls in town usually work at the record store already. While this does tend to keep them centrally located, i've found it's generally never a good idea to do anything too vile with someone who controls whether or not you get your special orders [[“hi, this is Nørð, i'm just calling to see if that Giuda album i special-ordered is in?” “It hasn't come in yet.” “But i ordered it SIX YEARS ago!!!” “I SAID IT HASN'T COME IN YET!!! GOODBYE!!!!”]])). However, i do have an unquenchable thirst for knowledge in this regard, and have taken it upon myself to, ah, *bone up*, if you will, on Alex's pickup techniques. First, he starts out by making a few smarmy comments about the girls' off-brand Bomb Pops™, to little effect. Undaunted, he plays his trump card by insulting their home stereo systems, and inviting them back to his place to hear their records right and proper, promising them “angel trumpets and devil trombones” ((curiously, all we hear back at his pad is a synthesizer version of the *Lone Ranger* theme—no trumpets, no trombones, devil or otherwise)). Being fresh out of trumpets and trombones myself, i quickly came to the conclusion that i'll need to try a somewhat different tack for instigating my future bevy of record store threesomes. Therefore, as i accept a nation's steamy sea of gratitude in advance, i hereby present, for your edification and bedification, a little list i call...

REV. NØRB'S CAN'T-MISS THREESOME PICKUP LINES FOR RECORD STORE DAY™ 2014!!!

1. “Looking at that Joan Baez limited edition Record Store Day™ release, ladies? Well, i can't promise you ‘Diamonds and Rust,’ but if you come back to my place, i'll give you each a pearl necklace.”
2. “Nice David Bowie picture disc, girls. Did you know he used to suck cock AND eat pussy? Come on back to my place and we'll listen to it as it was meant to be experienced.”



ALEX BARRETT

I will freely admit, picking up two girls at the record store is more easily said than done.

3. "So, wanna make like that Pantera/Poison Idea record and split?"

4. "Nice Fleetwood Mac limited edition Record Store Day™ 45. Did you know that Stevie Nicks' nose was so trashed from all the cocaine she did that she had a silver straw that she took on tour with her, and a roadie had to use it to blow coke up her butt before shows? No, i don't know how he knew which end of the straw went up her ass and which one went in his mouth, either. Did you know I own this straw? It's a valuable Rock Collectible! Why don't you girls come back to my place and bend over and i'll show you how it works? It works even better now that cocaine comes in a lotion-like glop, heated to the temperature of the human body!"

5. "Looking at that Motörhead Record Store Day™ album? Come back to my pad and you can check out my *Orgasmatron...* unless you ladies would rather *Iron Fist...*"

6. "Mudhoney also had a record called *Every Good Boy Deserves Fudge*. I don't really know what that means, but if i can't tie it into a Stevie Nicks reference, i'll eat my own shit!"

7. "Dean Martin? Heck yeah, i LOVE Rodney Dangerfield!" ("Dean Martin" was

the name of the dean in the movie *Back to School*, haw haw haw))

8. Katy Perry, huh? What do you think about that song about her kissing a girl? I think we should all go back to my place and celebrate her revolutionary spirit... while taking great pains to never, ever, listen to one of her records."

9. "Hey, I used to play bass AND sing in Suburban Mutilation... I assure you both that my mouth and my fingers can do two different things at once!"

10. "Pussy Galore. Who's with me on this one?"

11. "I'm just sitting here in my new van, on my beautiful waterbed, listening to the limited edition Record Store Day™ reissue of the *Meltdown with the Ramones* EP, wondering if you'd maybe want to go out and get drunk tonight?"

12. "Oh, you're picking up that Joan Jett reissue? Damn, i thought you two might be bi-curious."

13. "Nice Velvet Underground record, but you two can get *Loaded* for free back at my place. I'll also toss in a Ding Dong®!"

14. THE LUDOVICO TECHNIQUE PREVENTS ME FROM MAKING A HALF JAPANESE JOKE HERE.

15. You think screwing in fast-motion to the William Tell Overture is an exhausting experience? Wait 'til you try doing it to "El Salvador Stomp!"

16. "Teenage Filmstars, huh? Ladies, come on back to my place and i'll get you INTO that group!"

17. "I see you're picking up that Toxic Reasons *Ghost Town* seven-inch. Well, since you're already gonna get a little "Stuckey," tonight, why don't we go back to my place and take that thought to its natural conclusion?"

18. "You're getting BOTH Toxic Reasons seven-inches? Come on, i'll show you ladies how much fun you can have with just one!"

19. "Limited edition Record Store Day™ Grateful Dead record, huh? Welp, see ya later!"

20. "Are you ladies really gonna buy the Record Store Day™ reissue of *Candy Apple Grey*? Save your money, i have all kinds of records with no good songs on them—i write record reviews for *Razorcake*!"

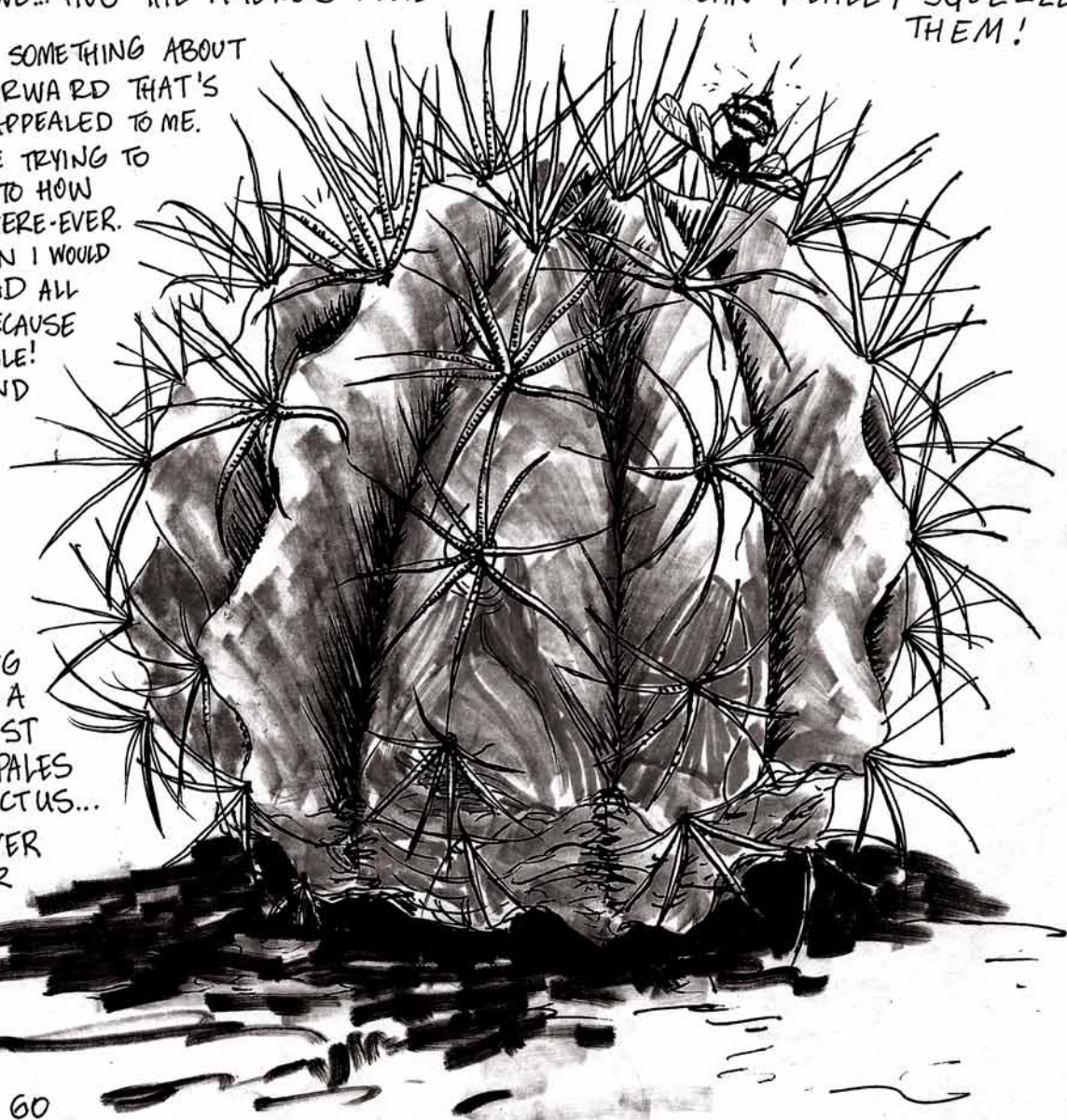
Love,
-Norb

BITE THE CACTUS

LOSING FRIENDS IS HARD. I LOST A FRIEND THIS WEEK AND IT MESSED ME UP. I'VE LOST TOO MANY THIS YEAR. I NEED THIS TO BE THE LAST (AND I'M SO SCARED IT WON'T BE). NOT THIS WAY! NOT WHEN IT FEELS LIKE THERE'S SOMETHING I COULD HAVE DONE TO KEEP THEM HERE.

WHAT CAN YOU DO WHEN YOU FEEL DEATH AROUND YOU? IT FEELS LIKE A VACUUM - IT SUCKS THE BREATH OUT OF ME, PULLS OUT EVERY SHRED OF OPTIMISM, EVERY OUNCE OF ENERGY AND FOCUS. ALL I CAN THINK TO DO IS SHOW THE PEOPLE I LOVE THAT I LOVE THEM. GO TO THE PLACES I LOVE, PLAY THE MUSIC I LOVE, PLANT THE PLANTS I LOVE, READ THE BOOKS I LOVE... HUG THE FRIENDS I LOVE ... I MEAN REALLY SQUEEZE THEM!

THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT MOVING FORWARD THAT'S ALWAYS APPEALED TO ME. I DON'T LIKE TRYING TO GO BACK TO HOW THINGS WERE-EVER. IF I DID THEN I WOULD JUST BE SAD ALL THE TIME-BECAUSE IT'S IMPOSSIBLE! I UNDERSTAND THAT BAD THINGS HAPPEN - LIFE IS SUFFERING AS WELL AS JOY - SOMETIMES WE'RE FLYING ALONG AND A SUDDEN GUST OF WIND IMPALES US ON A CACTUS... WE'RE NEVER READY FOR SUDDEN CHANGES BUT SINCE THERE'S NO WAY TO GO BACK, WE HAVE



TO WATCH OUT FOR OUR FRIENDS, AND REALIZE THAT ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE.

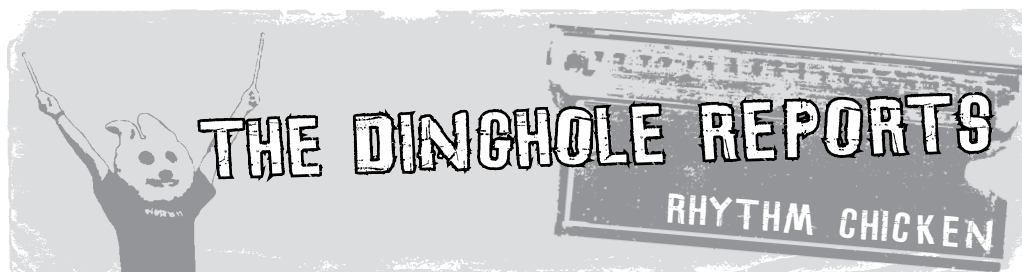
■ A study from the NATIONAL CENTER FOR HEALTH SERVICES SHOWS THAT OVER THE LAST DECADE, SUICIDE HAS SURPASSED CAR ACCIDENTS AS THE LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH IN AMERICANS. ■

-ADRIAN CHI



Dan Monick's Photo Page

Holly and Justin Van Hoy, November 10th, 2012



“Oh heck, I’m gonna say it. He looks like a Yeti miscarriage.”

The Land of Unrelenting Kielbasa

I grew up in Green Bay, a football town in semi-northern Wisconsin. I was raised knowing that there were two days a year known as *Opening Day*: the first day of deer hunting season and the first day of trout fishing season. My deer hunting legacy lasted all of one year (much to my father’s dismay), but I will still cast a spinner or a fly across the Peshtigo or Oconto River from time to time, trying to lure in a healthy pink-meat native rainbow or brook trout. To this day, when I hear the words *Opening Day* I instinctively think of the first Saturday in May, the first day of trout season.

In the Spring of 2000, I was a newcomer to the Milwaukee area. I made it through my first Milwaukee winter (a veritable cake walk compared to the Siberian tundra bleakness of my northern upbringing!) and was soon shocked to hear all the city-folk anxiously awaiting *Opening Day*. Were all these urbanites really *that* excited about getting out to those trout streams? Besides, it was only late March. The trout wouldn’t be ready for at least a month! My boss chuckled and called me a northwoods hick. It was the Opening Day of BASEBALL! Milwaukee likes to pretend they own the Packers at times, but they do host a bona fide MLB team, the Brewers. Growing up in Green Bay, I was too culturally connected to the Packers to care about any other sports.

With little or no interest in the Brewers (aside from the team name being, by far, the most beer-centric name in professional sports), I was in a bit of a stupor when they asked me to become their new secondary mascot. Being a fan of complete ridiculousness, I jumped at the chance. I had to swallow some pride and let them rename me as the “Rally Rabbit” (a name which truly confuses me to this day), but soon my drumming image was on regular rotation on the Miller Park Jumbotron. I even got to perform live to a stadium of thirty-five thousand baseball fans a few times. I got to polka dance with Bernie Brewer (the main mascot) and there was even talk of a Rally Rabbit bobble-head. For a season and a half, I felt like a minor baseball celebrity. I’ll never forget playing at a friend’s wedding in Kansas City when his brother leaned over and asked, “You’re not that guy from the Brewers, are you?”

Well, *just* as I was poised to take over the professional sports secondary mascot market, I got a wild feather up my egg hole

and decided to move to Poland (a move that still dumbfounds my talent agent (especially on April 1!)). The Brewers made their own replacement Rally Rabbit, a Disney-esque family-friendly media-friendly *clean* fuzzball which lasted about three games before he got the hook. The Brewers faded into the background and by the time I returned from the land of unrelenting kielbasa, the manager of scoreboard operations that hired me was fired himself and was soon working for the American Bowling Congress. A year later he emailed me again, asking for my percussive poultry show to appear at some world-class bowling events. By this time I had moved back to Poland... *again*.

So here I sit, eight years later, upstairs of my own Polish-themed soup diner. What day is it today? *OPENING DAY*. Through my business entanglements I have become part of the Facebook Nation Social Surveillance System. Even though I am a good four-hour drive north of Milwaukee, today’s Facebook posts constantly remind me that *TODAY IS OPENING DAY*. The sad truth is that now when people mention that, I don’t even think of wading out into the Peshtigo River with a fly rod next to my dad and under the evergreens and bald eagles. I think of people in Milwaukee taking the day off from work so they can tailgate and drink beer and watch the game and drink beer and complain about the team and drink beer and sing “Let’s Go Out to the Ballgame” and drink beer and then they will get around to drinking more beer and the game will end and they will go to their favorite bar to start drinking beer into the evening. If you just read that and you are from Wisconsin, you know I’m not kidding... one bit. I miss Milwaukee.

So today is Opening Day. I’ve been aware of many opening days as they’ve passed in the years since the Rally Rabbit’s demise. This year is a little different, however. I feel a certain turbulence in the force. If I were a rabbit (and not a CHICKEN, which I indeed AM), I would feel like my lucky rabbit’s feet were sheared off. Being a CHICKEN, I feel my major league wings getting metaphorically clipped! I feel the Brewers’ glove-slap to the face! I can feel the piercing chicken filet-knife to the back! The Scriptures of Ruckus foretold of this day, but I failed to recognize this new dawn. The Milwaukee Brewers now have a new secondary mascot.

The last soup-spoon of dirt has been tossed on the Rally Rabbit’s grave!

Just three weeks ago, I was huddled around a cold beer in a nearby igloo when I saw the news clip on some sports television network. Apparently, the Brewers training camp in Florida or Arizona or some other weak-ass tropical state has been repeatedly visited by some stray mangy *mutt*. This possibly rabid and disgusting yippy canine has somehow won the hearts of the players and coaches alike, always hanging around practice, playing catch, looking a little cute, and other unspeakable atrocities. Soon enough, the players became collectively entranced under the seductive swoon of this *mongrel*. They named him Hank (after legendary Brewer Hank Aaron), adopted him as the team pet, and brought him back to Milwaukee.

Oh, what species is this supposed new team savior, you ask? Is he a Doberman? A golden retriever? A border collie? Or even a majestic blend of black lab and husky? No. He’s some type of yippy little rag mop, poodle-looking thing that could have been turned down when the Star Trek producers were hiring tribbles! He looks like a hairball that some drunk manatee coughed up after a good night at the watering hole! He looks like a stubborn dingleberry off the hinder of an obese Sasquatch! Oh heck, I’m gonna say it. He looks like a Yeti miscarriage. There. I said it.

Apparently, this new little Brew City media darling has won the hearts and minds of EVERY LIVING BREWERS FAN IN THE STATE. His T-shirts have been selling out constantly in the stadium gift shop. They’ve already announced and confirmed his forthcoming bobble head giveaway day at Miller Park. HE EVEN GETS TO RACE WITH THE SAUSAGES, THE WORLD FAMOUS KLEMENTS SAUSAGE RACE EVERY HOME GAME. For this iconic race, they even made him a small hotdog costume. I think I’m gonna puke. And *HOW* will the Rhythm Chicken combat this gross injustice?

**Dinghole Report #142:
Hank-wanking Ruckus
at a REAL Brewery!
(Rhythm Chicken
sighting #679)**

It was a Thursday night in Milwaukee and my hen and I were down in the big city for some sort of escape from the frozen

peninsula of Door County, yet again. My friend Andy was now conducting brewery tours at my favorite brewery in the entire Milwaukee area, the Lakefront Brewery. My hen and I had already run our afternoon errands around the big city and it was time to hit Funtown! We pulled up to the brewery parking lot and I couldn't help but notice that we were under the bridge in the industrial area of town where Die Kreuzen had many band photos taken. I felt like we were within rather important musical coordinates. Geography was on my side. Once inside, I made a quick break to the little wrangler's room to take a whiz. Above the toilet I noticed a painting of the Anderson Dock in Ephraim, Wisconsin..... THE TINY, TINY TOWN I LIVE IN UP NORTH. Ugh, life is weird. Up north in Ephraim I gaze into punk albums and see industrial river scenes in Milwaukee. I go to the industrial river scene area, go to the men's room, and see paintings of EPHRAIM, MY TINY VILLAGE I JUST ESCAPED.

We took the brewery tour, conducted by the very animated and lively Andy of the Chinese Telephones (amongst other notable rock units). It was my first Lakefront Brewery tour in about fourteen years. It was still as awesome as I remember, what little I remember from fourteen years ago. What made this tour better was the live entertainment at the tour's end... THE RHYTHM CHICKEN!

The brewery tour ends in the back of the spacious beer hall where they have the actual beer mug from the old County Stadium display where Bernie Brewer would slide out of his beer chalet, down the slide, and into the large mug of beer, and the balloons would fly out and the stadium would yell. I remember seeing this quite a few times as a youngster when my dad took us kids down to see non-Packer related sports. Lakefront Brewery bought the actual prop beer mug and it now bears their name on the mug, a totally authentic slice of Milwaukee history from the days of old!

I got the nod of approval from the other punk rock tour guides. The beer hall full of post-tour beer tasters were anxious for something, anything... and then anything happened. The drumroll opened up the show, the thunderous rhythms echoed about the cavernous alcohol chamber, and the eyes and ears did squint and squiggle! I pounded every gosh darn beat like it was my last! THE CHAOS WAS ABSOLUTE! Cheers swirled around the beer consumption arena as the rhythms pounded forth! THIS IS MILWAUKEE, THE BEER CONSUMPTION CAPITOL OF THE UNIVERSE. I like to think that the nation's beer consumption capitol mascot has tall, moldy ears and punk rock roots, not a ragmop carpet of cuteness with his own stupid bobble-head.

Okay, I'm jealous.

—Rhythm Chicken



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“Yeah, a crook called us punk, I’ll be damned.”

Nardwuar vs. The Sonics

The Human Serviette Part II

Transcription by Matthew Hart

Nardwuar: Gerry, we’re back here with The Sonics, but for a while there was the *Sinderella* version of the Sonics, the Invaders. The Gerry Roslie effect. What was that?

Gerry: Well, that was some guys who came up and said, “Do you wanna do some songs on an album?” They said, “Can we call it The Sonics?” I said, “No, don’t call it The Sonics. I don’t want to do that.” They said, “Okay, we’ll call it the Invaders.” Then when they put the record out, the guy puts it out like that (as The Sonics), and I said, “Well, what’s this Sonics on here for?” “Well, the guy, the promoter, in L.A. said that would probably sell better.” [laughs] No kidding. That was bad news.

Nardwuar: Did you do any gigs with them? How long did that last?

Gerry: We never even played as them, with a band! I came into the room where they had the recorder and all that. I was just singing the tracks. I never played with that band.

Nardwuar: At this time, Larry, you were involved in this particular band, Charlie & The Tunas! [Nardwuar hands The Sonics a record]

Larry: [Looking at the band photo on the back of the record] You notice how everybody’s necks were crooked. We changed members so much that all we ended up doing, is we had black on white pictures, so we just cut the heads off and replace ’em.

Nardwuar: See, this is for Sonics completists. What can you say about Charlie & The Tunas?

Larry: It’s just a nickel and dime band. This was after I hadn’t played since ‘66 and this was some time in the ‘80s. It was a way of getting back and trying to learn to play again. It was fine though.

Gerry: [looking at the record] Holy...did you have a beard?

Larry: Look at that neck!

Rob: You’re the bearded guy?!

Larry: Yeah, I had a beard.

Rob: Holy mackerel, you look like the Unabomber!

Larry: Look at this neck! You can tell his neck is not on right. [laughs]

Nardwuar: You weren’t paying attention at this time Rob, because you were flying airplanes?

Rob: Yeah, I was someplace else. I had never heard of Charlie & The Tunas, but that’s no big deal ‘cause they never heard of me either.

Nardwuar: So, you were a commercial pilot?

Rob: Yes.

Nardwuar: So, did you meet any Sonics fans at all when you were doing your commercial piloting? Did you ask them up to the front?

Rob: All the time.

Nardwuar: Who did you run into? Did you actually really carry Springsteen around and then he found out that you were in The Sonics inadvertently?

Rob: I didn’t carry him around, but I flew him from Los Angeles to West Palm Beach, Florida, yeah. He and his wife.

Nardwuar: And then he found out you were in The Sonics? Like, did you tell people, “Hi! It’s captain...”

Larry: “I used to play in The Sonics!” (mockingly)

Nardwuar: I guess I was just curious of people you encounter...

Rob: Springsteen did a show in Seattle and he said, “I’m going to do a song by The Sonics and I’m not talking about the basketball team.” He did “Have Love, Will Travel.” So, I was flying him and his wife was asleep. It was the middle of the night and we’re halfway across the country, and I walk back and he engaged me in conversation. I said, “I’m glad I had a chance to talk to you because you did a nice thing for me and some friends of mine and I wanted to thank you for it.” He said, “Oh, what was that?” I said, “Well, my name’s Rob Lind. I’m the sax player in The Sonics.” And all he wanted to talk about was how Larry got that fabulous guitar tone out of his amp. So, we had a good conversation. He’s a very nice guy. His wife is a very nice lady. Nice people.

Nardwuar: Over the years, did you encounter anybody else who liked The Sonics in that way when you were flying them around? Even in Vietnam? Were there any pickup bands you played with in Vietnam?

Rob: Yeah, there was, but it had nothing to do with The Sonics. I flew people every once and a while. I flew the Beach Boys. I flew the manager of the Eagles and a couple of the guys from the Eagles.

Nardwuar: Did you get to control the onboard music at all? And like pump some Sonics there?

Rob: I had nothing to do with that. I was just sitting in the seat, minding my own business.

Nardwuar: [Nardwuar hands The Sonics a record] The Sonics, original, *original*, Northwest punk...

Larry: Oh, this is the same guy that doesn’t pay royalties, isn’t it?

Nardwuar: Original Northwest punk!

Larry: Yeah, a crook called us punk, I’ll be damned. How bout that?

Nardwuar: And this was issued in the ‘80s or late ‘70s, and this was sort of like the punk revival. Was this when you sort of realized what was going on, because you, Larry—it goes back to Hooters doesn’t it? You picked up *Cavalier Magazine*, a nudie mag?

Larry: It wasn’t Hooters. It was just a café next to a music store. Yeah, I was going through it (*Cavalier*), I wasn’t looking at the pictures at all. I was making sure I didn’t look at the pictures. All of a sudden there was an article there about The Sonics. It was something about people in the audience in New York City, yelling to do certain songs.

Nardwuar: Which is pretty incredible.

Larry: And then I found an Italian magazine. I couldn’t read it, but I knew it was about The Sonics. Then we started hearing more and more about it all the time.

Nardwuar: But as I mentioned, I was obsessed by the Sonics. I put on a gig in the 1980s and look at the gig ticket. [Nardwuar hands The Sonics a gig ticket] Look who’s on the gig ticket there, Larry.

Larry: Whoa! Before I got my hair ripped out. Wow.

Nardwuar: It was a gig called “Live at the Church” with my band, the Evaporators, a band called the One Eyed Jacks, and another band called the Four Sticks, named after a Led Zeppelin song. So, we have Live at the Church!

Larry: Your band was in there?

Nardwuar: The Evaporators! Yeah, still going today. So, it’s all been started by The Sonics. You are to blame for me, Nardwuar The Human Serviette.

Larry: Wow, I didn’t think you were that old.



MITCH CLEM | WATERCOLOR BY NATION OF AMANDA

I told him we don't play garage. We play Sonic music.

Nardwuar: I've been in the game a long time. Actually, how old is old?

Larry: Ask Rob.

Rob: I can't remember. [laughs]

Nardwuar: People have come up to you Rob, haven't they, and said, "You're not a garage band." You've said, "Well, we're not a Farfisa band." What can you tell people about that, you're not a Farfisa band?

Rob: I'm not familiar with that term.

Nardwuar: I think you were talking about in Greece?

Larry: We went in to do our sound check, and before we went in the owner was really nice, but sort of scared. We did the sound check, he came out to me and was almost crying, saying, "That's not garage! That's not garage!" So, I told him we don't play garage. We play Sonic music. So, we played that night and the audience really liked it. Then he came and slobbered all over me. Just really happy.

Nardwuar: Now, I was wondering, lastly here, Dusty, you are in the rock'n'roll band now known as The...

Sonics all together: Sonics!

Nardwuar: Does Dusty forget he's in The Sonics? Because if you forget that you're in The Sonics, things could go horribly wrong. Like you did some drumming for the Boo-Yaa T.R.I.B.E., the rap band?

Dusty: Yeah, the Boo-Yaa T.R.I.B.E. They called me, "Angel Dust, hey, Angel Dust." So, yeah, that was a pretty interesting gig. [laughs]

Nardwuar: That's pretty cool. You drummed for the Boo-Yaa T.R.I.B.E., you drummed for The Queens. What do the rest of The Sonics know about you?

Dusty: Um, very little actually. I try and keep that all separate and keep that all away from them. I don't want to scare them or anything. I'm a little worried about scaring them off. Actually, when I first saw you guys in Italy, we were on the same festival, The Beat Festival, with Gianni, the Titty Twister. He...

Nardwuar: Um, the what?

Freddie: Titty Twister, that is.

Dusty: Anyway...

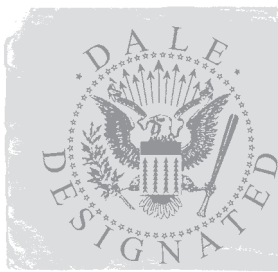
Nardwuar: Oh, do I ask Gerry about the Titties? [laughs]

Dusty: So, we go to play a festival together and we were having fun. We saw each other the next day. It was pretty cool. And then I saw them again a couple of years later at the Ink and Iron Festival. I was playing with another band there. Of course, I was doing like Sonic fills, nothing like Bob Bennett (original Sonics drummer) snare drum rolls. So, I like to put them in anywhere I can. Rob was standing out in front of me and he goes, "If we ever need a drummer, we're going to call you." And I said, "You better damned do that." And sure as shit, he did.

Nardwuar: Well, thanks so much Sonics from Tacoma, Washington. Keep on rocking in the free world. And doot doola doot doo...

Sonics: Doot! doot! [pause] Nardwuar! Sonics!

Hop to nardwuar.com to hear the unedited interview.



I'M AGAINST IT

DESIGNATED DALE

"The dude working the anesthesia dials was a fellow punker."

iEye, Caramba!

I've never missed a column deadline in the thirteen years of this magazine's existence. Last issue (#79) was my first time due to circumstances beyond my control.

Friday, January 17

I start noticing haziness in my right eye late this evening, like that of a light fog or mist that is really noticeable when lights near. A black, oblong-shaped squiggle is also present that won't go away. Something ain't right.

Monday, January 20

I go see a doctor at the outpatient clinic I work at in the morning. The doc finds nothing and rules out any infection, but immediately sets an appointment for me to see our ophthalmology department on Wednesday with strict orders to go sooner if it worsens. The uneasy feeling in my stomach heightens.

Tuesday, January 21

Just before noon at work, I start noticing a blackish-brown blockage obstructing roughly twenty-five percent of my right eye's view. Fuck this. I immediately get over to the ophthalmology department across town and have it examined after my eye was dilated. I find out that roughly a third of my retinal wall had detached/collapsed (the haziness) and that it was beginning to rupture (the blackish-brown blockage).

The corneal specialist immediately performs an in-office procedure that tries to hold the detaching/rupturing retinal wall in place: First, a pair of Clockwork Orange-ish surgical clamps hold my eye socket open so wide that it feels like the doctor could back a truck into it. Then, with some ugly-ass needle, a series of nerve-deadening shots are administered all over the eyeball. This is paired with a carbon dioxide line that feels like the whole eye socket has severe frostbite (for over fifteen minutes—my wife Yvonne timed this Nazi-like injection process).

After the series of injections was finished, a gang of gas bubbles were injected into the center of the eyeball, with the intention of acting as a scaffolding to hold the injured parts in place in an attempt to avoid surgery.

Yes, this was all done while being wide awake. Fuck me. I was then instructed to sit in a hunched-over position to let gravity position the bubbles where they need to be 24/7 until my follow-up two days later.

Thursday, January 23

Followed up with the specialist, Dr. Kaba, letting him know that the blackish-brown blob is covering over a third of the vision in the affected eye. After dilating and scoping out my eyeball, he informs me that the in-office procedure didn't work because of the progression of my detachment and rupturing. He schedules surgery for me first thing the following Monday. I'm instructed to lay as still as possible on my back until the morning of my surgery—so as not to risk the chance of further rupturing the retinal wall—and to call him the second anything worsens. This includes no reading, watching TV, or trying to focus on anything. I follow homeboy's orders to the T, and Yvonne sets me up with a recorded book on her iPad when we got home. The increasingly uneasy feeling in my stomach is now switching to touching cloth, or as some people refer to as "shitting their pants." Damn, I don't wanna lose my right eye and have to wear a patch. I wasn't even into pirates as a kid...what the fuck?!

Friday, January 24

I wake up and notice the blackish-brown mass impacting about ninety percent of the vision through my right eye. I go through the channels to get Dr. Kaba on the phone. He calls me back a little while later and tells me to get down to the hospital. Monday's surgery has been pushed up to tonight. It has to be done immediately. By the time Yvonne and I got down, checked in, and finally got wheeled into a vacant operating room to be put under, it was after 1:30 AM. The dude working the anesthesia dials was a fellow punker, and I joked with 'em to not fuck up the stage mix at the board during my surgery, or he's going to have one pissed-off widow on his hands.

Saturday, January 25

Dr. Kaba's surgery goes off without a hitch (just over two hours). He tells me that there was quite a bit a debris and blood inside my eyeball. There was some lasering done, both to my retinal wall and the ruptures. He injected a big gas bubble inside and it's butting up against the entire eyeball's inner circumference to hold the repaired areas in place while they healed, much like the in-office procedure.

In addition to this, Dr. Kaba made very clear how important it was that I follow his orders of positioning my body, so that the gas bubble stays

in its proper place to aid with the reconstructive healing. I had to remain completely face down for twenty-four hours a day until the following Tuesday, when I can start sitting completely up only during the daytime. Awesome. Three whole days of staring at the ground, both awake and sleeping.

Thank *god* my cousin David came up with the idea of getting a padded massage chair (like you see at the mall in those massage kiosks) so I could sit somewhat comfortably throughout the day. Yvonne found a place in the morning after we came home and grabbed one, along with a padded head attachment that allows me to be completely face down, like you see on a massage table. With these two set-ups, I switch back and forth at night for sleeping when my body started locking up or getting sore. Thank the stars above for my Yvonne.

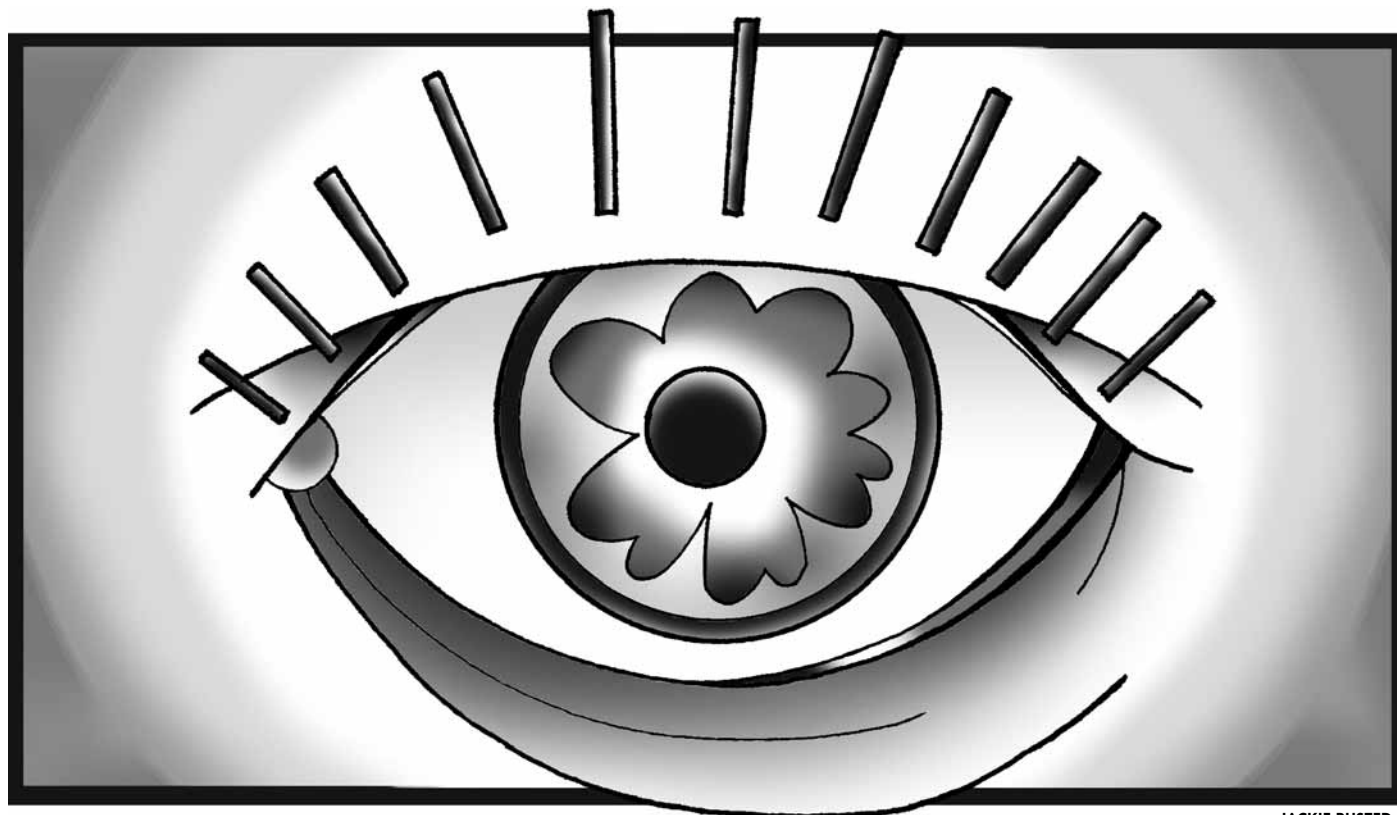
Sunday, January 26

Dr. Kaba calls me and wants me to come to his office to take the bandage cup off, clean the eye, and take a look at things after he dilated it. After cleaning up my eye that looked like a Venus Flytrap with gonorrhea and scooping out my dilated eyebulb, he informs me that the repair work looks really good. He starts me on a tapering-down regimen of two different medical steroid eye drops for the following eight weeks.

The whole view through my right eye looks as though I'm under water, due to the surgery and injected bubble. Although he wants me to start using both eyes as usual, I'm put on a strict exertion/weight limit of no more than sitting up to eat, wiping my ass, and a quick shower. I can't fucking wait for Tuesday morning to get here. The iPad, Netflix, and I proceed to go on an *Adam-12* bender, re-visiting the Los Angeles I knew as a wee heathen child.

Tuesday, January 28

I awoke like a kid on Christmas this morning, freeing myself from the seventy-two-hour, face-parallel-to-the-ground sentence, and rustle around to sit up in bed. Man, I know sitting up in a bed doesn't sound like much, but that was one of the greatest mornings of my life. I still have to sleep completely face down at night, though, until the gas bubble is completely dissipated. I start watching this bubble like a hawk, wondering how long it's gonna take to start shrinking so's I can get some field of view back in this eye. I



JACKIE RUSTED

I don't wanna lose my right eye and have to wear a patch. I wasn't even into pirates as a kid...*what the fuck?!*

also have to keep telling myself that I can't lift anything of weight, bear down, or put any kind of force that might jeopardize the surgery I just had. Our two feline offspring, Sheena and Vincent, are getting spoiled as hell, being up in our room and on the bed all day. Lazy-ass cats.

Monday, February 3

Another follow-up with Dr. Kaba, getting dilated and scooped out again. Things are looking on track according to his pokin' around, and I need to just keep doin' what I'm doin'. The bubble is most definitely shrinking, too, and I'm starting to have a bit of a field of blurred vision. Come on, gas bubble, do your thang. This face-down business at night is driving me up the wall, so much, that I'm desperate enough to play rain/thunder sounds on the iPad to put my invalid ass to sleep, and it actually works. Luckily, I haven't had to take anything for pain the whole time; just some diphenhydramine (Benadryl) to help sleep.

Tuesday, February 4

I went back to see Dr. Kaba again today because I'm noticing weird reflections as well as refractions of light stemming from the bubble up into the part of my eye that has open view. Another specialist dilates my eye,

examines me, and consults with Dr. Kaba. They return and tell me exactly what I was starting to think was happening: because the bubble is starting to shrink in size, it's acting as a reflector of the things/light that I'm looking at in the rest of my eye. Whew, right on.

Wednesday, February 12

My dwindling gas bubble bids farewell to me this afternoon around 2:30, and I call Dr. Kaba to let him know, as well as to ask what is next. I'm way stoked to find out that I can finally sleep like a normal human being, now that the gas bubble is gone. I also learn that I can return to work the following week and that all weight restrictions have been lifted, meaning I can resume to my normal life, including playing my drums. Yes! I don't think I ever looked as forward to going to bed as I did that night.

After going back to work for a couple of weeks, I've had a few follow-ups to check the progress of my peeper, and although everything checks out awesome, the doc tells me that my type of surgery has a slow recuperating process for the retinal wall to heal for as good as it will be (eight to twelve months, and it will never be perfect). The brain also has to learn to communicate with

the reconstructed part of the eye bulb. It's so weird. Towards the end of this year, I'll be able to see my optometrist to get examined for a new set of glasses, otherwise, if I did it now, I'd literally have to get a new right lens for my glasses about every week until then.

I ask Dr. Kaba what causes this kind of eye failure, to try and understand or get a heads-up: blunt force, heavy lifting, or bearing down too much? He tells me possibly, but more times than none, it just happens. It. Just. Happens. Even more frightening, he tells me that if a case like mine went ignored for at least another forty-eight hours, you can say goodbye to the eye due to complete detachment. Permanently.

The moral of the story here, folks: If you notice *anything* out of the ordinary with your vision (no one knows your eyesight better than you) do yourself a favor, and go get that shit checked out. Please.

Much love and thanks go out to Yvonne, David, Jai, Todd, Art, Jeff, both my moms Pat and Katy, and the cool, steady hand of Dr. Kaba!

I'm Against It,
—Designated Dale

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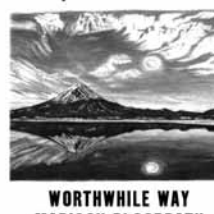
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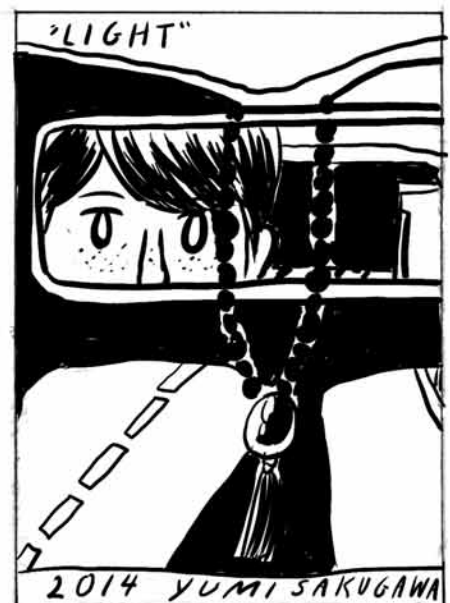
"I DON'T WANT
YOUR MONEY
I JUST WANT
SOMETHING
BRIGHT"



I GAVE HER
A LIGHTER
AN EX ONCE
GAVE ME



I WAS
SUPPOSED TO
QUIT SMOKING
IN ANY CASE



One Punk's Guide to Poetry *

*
EMPHASIS
- ON THE -
ONE

BY
CHERYL
KLEIN

Illustrations by Marcos Siref
Layout by Todd Taylor

You have
the two worlds of
poetry,
the two stereotypes
that are too true:

angsty
people at
coffee houses

VS.

pretentious
academic
bullshit

1. The Shel Silverstein Years

I memorized my first poem in second grade, shortly after my talent show troupe ground to a final, Balkanized halt. We were always planning new acts. Our reenactment of the two-hour, made-for-TV gymnastics biopic *Nadia* failed because we couldn't stop arguing over who would play Nadia. We later considered lip synching the songs of our favorite pop stars—blonde Christyna would be Madonna, while redheaded Mia would be Cyndi Lauper. "And you can play Tina Turner, since you have brown hair," they told me. I had no idea who Tina Turner was, so I assumed she, too, must be a blue-eyed, Jewish-looking person.

But, when even a fairly simple, a capella version of "Rockin' Robin" fell apart, I realized I was on my own.

My mom, a children's librarian, suggested I recite a poem. I didn't really see how that was a *talent*—certainly not like singing or doing back flips—but I was a competitive kid and I was hell-bent on being in the Pennekamp Elementary talent show. So I put on a black leotard, neon orange T-shirt, and a headband with Styrofoam balls bobbing at the end of springs to recite Richard Digance's "The Ants at the Olympics."

At last year's Jungle Olympics,
The Ants were completely outclassed
In fact, from an entry of sixty-two teams,
the Ants came their usual last.
They didn't win one single medal.
Not that that's a surprise.
The reason was not for lack of trying
But more their unfortunate size....

And so on—stanza after stanza about what losers the ants are compared to the zippy cheetahs and the heavy-hitting hippos. Revisiting this poem thirty years later, my first thought is: *What kind of life was my mom trying to prepare me for?*

Possible answer: the life of a poet?

That was my first brush with poetry. Shel Silverstein's collections were always in heavy rotation at the school library, and a few years later, my best friend Bonnie and I recited his poem "Sick," in which the narrator bluffs her/his way through a list of terrifying symptoms to avoid school, only to learn... "What's that you say? / You say today is...Saturday? / G'bye, I'm going out to play!"

We drew spots on our faces with eyeliner, wrapped our knees in Ace bandages and wore matching Garfield nightshirts.

That was the peak of my poetic life until high school, when my friends and I discovered open mic night at the Hungry Mind, a coffee shop near the pier in Manhattan Beach. We drank sugary iced cappuccinos while listening to our peers' teen angst poems and the featured poets' adult angst poems. It never occurred to me to read anything myself, but sometimes I'd stop on the long walk home to scribble in a journal printed with sunflowers. I wrote a long poem about a dead pigeon whose increasingly car-crushed body I'd passed on the way to school for weeks. I fancied myself something of an animal rights activist, but I would rather write about the indignities of death than clean that shit up.

There was a guy who read erotic poetry with a few shirt buttons undone and got big applause from the moms at the coffee shop. We thought he was hilarious. We thought our teachers, stumbling drunkenly out of Manhattan Beach's one nightclub down the street, were hilarious. We thought our classmate, who read a sad poem about her ex-boyfriend at the open mic, was a genius.

Amy and Jenessa were my poetry-going buddies. Not coincidentally, they were also into punk music and guys who rode skateboards and halfheartedly dealt drugs. They had an edge that Bonnie—still my official bestie—lacked, especially since she'd started dating Jason, the basketball-playing drum line leader she would eventually marry and divorce. It would be a big exaggeration to say that poetry—about which I wrote grudging, bullshit essays in school—was "A Way Out," but on some level I dug the idea that there was a community of interesting people who liked words like I did.

2. Not the Norton

And there you have the two worlds of poetry, the two stereotypes that are too true: angst people at coffee houses vs. pretentious academic bullshit. Neither camp likes the other, and most people hate them both. When Todd asked me to write "One Punk's Guide to Poetry," I imagined a survey course, starting with Sappho and finishing with some kind of punk alterna-canon. It sounded daunting and, the more I thought about it, boring.

If you want the *Norton Anthology*, you can just get your hands on a copy of the *Norton Anthology*. The last time I saw one, it belonged to my friend Tommy; I borrowed it for some reason, and it sat in the hatchback part of my car until it grew little freckles of mold.

People who want a more concise overview of various aesthetic movements would be wise to check out the Essays & Interviews section of poets.org, the website of the Academy of American Poets. They're one of roughly four literary nonprofits that employ more than two people, so you know they're legit.

From 2002 until very recently, I worked for an organization called Poets & Writers. Poetry was fifty percent of my job. Or rather, making tiny grants to poets in California was fifty percent of my job. I got to know a lot of them—poets are good people, if a little disorganized—but I was still a fiction writer who dealt with poetry strictly on an as-needed basis. I warned Todd that, if I were to accept this mission, my article would be very heavy on contemporary poets. Women poets. Queer poets. West Coast poets. Todd being Todd said, "Cool, write whatever you want!"

Then I realized that contemporary poets, women poets, queer poets, and West Coast poets are exactly who you don't see much of in the *Norton Anthology*, or even *Writer's Almanac*, bless Garrison Keillor's heart. So maybe there's a place for this particular punk's personal poetry platter. (Hey, alliteration!) If the survey-course model is a prix fixe menu at a fancy restaurant, this platter is the happy hour menu at your local bar—the one with cheap beer and good, deep-fried chickpeas.

In high school, poetry tends to be taught like this: *Poetry is a magical thing written by geniuses who were born geniuses, and our job as non-geniuses is to unlock it and discover the secret of their genius. There is only one secret, and if you think a poem is about something else, or if you just don't like it, you are wrong.*

In other words, poetry is taught like math, but with an added layer of mythology that tends to shame even nerdy would-be poetry lovers who spend Tuesday nights at the Hungry Mind. Most of the poets I know devote their adult lives trying to undo the poetry trauma high schools inflict. (Obviously, some high school teachers are creative and passionate. Some are poets. But almost all have to tie themselves in knots to sprinkle a little inspiration on the vast test prep desert that is public education.)

One of my favorite teachers at UCLA was Chris Cunningham, a young, energetic adjunct who sometimes wore bicycle shorts during office hours. I quickly learned that you didn't have to read the books he assigned in their entirety; you could just point to a passage and write about how it reminded you of your roommate's encounter with racism. Despite my literary slackerness, I learned a ton in his class—about the world and culture and my fellow students. I also learned that it is perfectly acceptable to make a syllabus built only of books you like, as Chris did one quarter. This "guide" is my stuff-I-like syllabus. These poets are some poets I think you should know; a jumping-off point for your own stuff-you-like syllabus.

3. The Populists

"Accessibility" is always being debated in the poetry world, for the reasons discussed above. One camp of poets and readers says if we want poetry to matter, people who don't have PhD's in literature should be able to read it. It should be relevant, it should be *about* something.

The other camp says poetry should push language and play with it, doing what fiction and essays cannot. Not only does it not have to mean anything, it should question the meaning of meaning. And dumbing shit down doesn't do anyone any favors.

I've alternated between the two camps, though my heart (and comprehension ability) is with the populists. Eventually I realized that the cliché about writing choosing you, and not the other way around, is true. Honest poets don't write obtuse, difficult poetry because they love to confuse people. They write it because it's the truest way they know how to say what they want to say. On the flip side, I always bristle when struggling writers sigh and say, "I should just write a trashy romance and make a ton of money," as if integrity is the only thing standing between them and a Bentley. I believe that the authors of trashy romance novels *love trashy romance novels*. If they were just doing it for the paycheck, it would show.

Lucky for us, there are many writers who fall somewhere in between on the accessibility spectrum. I first read Eileen Myles in grad school. She writes long, skinny poems, allegedly because she had a skinny reporter's notebook when she first started writing. It's hard to feel too intimidated by a line that's only three words long. She writes about city life and smoking and fucking women in ways that made grad-school me swoon like a middle-aged woman at the Hungry Mind. "On the Death of Robert Lowell" in her collection *Maxfield Parrish* captures exactly how Myles feels about the canon and the luxuries of fame:

O, I don't give a shit.
He was an old white haired man
Insensate beyond belief and
Filled with much anxiety about his imagined
Pain. Not that I'd know
I hate fucking wasps.
The guy was a loon.
Signed up for Spring Semester at MacLeans
A really lush retreat among pines and
Hippy attendants. Ray Charles also
Once rested there.
So did James Taylor...
The famous, as we know, are nuts.
Take Robert Lowell.
The old white haired coot.
Fucking dead.

I have a black T-shirt that says, in big purple block letters, *YOU GOT THE STYLES EILEEN MYLES*. I bought it at RADAR, a queer San Francisco reading series co-run by writers Michelle Tea and Ali Liebegott. They thought that if music fans could buy concert T-shirts, poetry fans should be able to buy shirts at readings. Poets should be rock stars. (Does this make the older, college-teaching Myles a Robert Lowell in her own little world?)

Both Myles and Tea write prose too, and I sometimes forget which form I read their words in. Was Myles' anecdote about wearing a miniskirt to a kid's birthday party—an attempt to femme it up with all those heterosexual parents that backfired and left her feeling like a slut—in her autobiographical novel, or one of her books of poetry? They both write poetic prose and narrative-ish poetry.

My favorite poem of Tea's is "the Beautiful," an ode to America—as difficult girlfriend or neglectful parent—that channels Allen Ginsberg, probably:

... america
what shitty parents you were.
we have to
run away
again and again
we keep
coming back
to see if you missed us
but you didn't
even know
we were gone.
we write tell-all books
about our rotten childhoods
the bad food
you fed us

-the coat-hanger
beatings
can i process
my bad relationship
with america,
can we go to couple's counseling
can we sit down and talk about
all this
bad energy?...

My girlfriend and I have had arguments about Michelle Tea's work. C.C. thinks she can be a bit of a cool kid, smoking outside some badass bar. But I think Tea breaks down the wanting behind the cool kid's cigarette. A lesser writer would pretend not to want America, with its strip malls and Patriot Act, but Tea—who wrote wonderfully about the particular joys of working in an '80s mall in her young adult novel *Rose of No Man's Land*—is aware of the wounds that led her to reject the mainstream. And she's not afraid to talk about them.

People who love poetry often point to the fact that, after September 11, when the whole country was simultaneously speechless and overwhelmed by talking heads, certain poems started making their way to inboxes. Auden was a favorite.

It seemed that poetry was a way to touch the sublime. I define art the way I define God, as something that is more than the sum of its parts. Poetry is a way to use words to make something more than words. I can say, without hyperbole, that certain poems have saved me. From what? Fear, probably, that thing that is always about death, but actually worse than death. From isolation. From feeling like I'm the only one this crazy.

In 2011 I had a miscarriage that left me in a state of postpartum depression (but without the baby, just to add insult to injury) that manifested as intense hypochondria. For the few months I was pregnant, I could barely believe it, and I constantly checked my body for signs it was true, and that I would have a real, healthy baby. Did I have morning sickness? Was I having the right kind of cramps or the wrong kind? After the miscarriage, that little internal monitor worked overtime, but had nothing to find but things that must be wrong with me: MS, lupus, at least four kinds of cancer. I felt crazy because I was crazy.

No one writes about medical anxiety better than David Hernandez. Here's his poem "Gene Test," which appeared in *The Rumpus*:

Now is after the fact.

Before, a cloud of bees
frenzied above the neighbor's yard, then ours.

Which is to say, hazard cannot stay long

in one place. Or one place is
never hazardless. Two weeks

we waited for the results, two weeks

I dissolved a cube of ice
in whisky, and Lisa's mind was always

elsewhere, already cutting out

her breasts, her ovaries. Then the terrible
weight was crushed, the fine powder

swept to the vanishing point,

and I felt, for a few footsteps, that we were
immortal, our cells

never honeycombing toward ruin.

Slaphappy heart, bamboozled brain,
I also had believed the bees

an omen, how they mobbed and sizzled

around our angels' trumpet tree
as if the yellow flowers could finally

blow notes. That humming: it was not music.

More like the drone of a chainsaw
a block away, dismantling another sapling.

Hypochondria can be a kind of addiction. You're always riding the roller coaster of maybe-I'm-not-okay / hurray-I'm-okay! And even when you leave the imaging center with a piece of paper saying your MRI was normal, you know that someone else's was not, and that in the future yours might not be either. In other words, the humming is always there.

I secretly suspect that some poets write about language because they're afraid to write about love and death. There's so much bad poetry out there. A really amazing poet is one who can write a love poem that does not invoke the moon. Or one who can mention the moon (as Terry Wolverton does) without exiling the reader to Poetry Land, a flat, unearthly place of pomegranates and songbirds, whose inhabitants know the names of trees.

A really amazing poet can write a poem about her dog's death that will make you cry, and not just because you once had a dog who died. Eloise Klein Healy's poem "Into Eternity" (*Artemis in Echo Park*), about her dog Pauline, imagines death as a connecting force, defeating the messiness of modernity and language:

...the first tongue and movement,
the reptile brain and speech of smell.
The new brain stands up on its hind legs
and forgets itself.

But I build a small clay boat
to carry us back to eternity.
Companion species, we will row ourselves
back before our names.

I'm rereading this knowing that Eloise is currently recovering from viral encephalitis, which impacted her memory and speech, and took her back before her name. From what I've heard, it's been a long, slow journey, full of terror and wisdom and delight. I wonder if she, like me, has occasionally written in a voice that resides years ahead of what she's able to wrap her real life around.

4. The Boundary Pushers

There was a guy named José in my program at CalArts who wrote "experimental" poetry, which means I had no idea what the fuck it was about. At best, I could say he sometimes created pretty word collages; there would be a fragment or two I found lovely, like finding a sparkly piece of sea glass whose original source is unidentifiable. If I hadn't known José—a friendly, laidback guy with a scraggly black beard—I would have found his poems pretentious.

Then I heard him read. During CalArts's Thursday night art openings, writing students would gather in one of the lecture halls for an open reading series we called The Pig. One time I got up and read a full-page ad I'd found in *Variety*, placed by a woman who thought her life story should be made into a movie. In other words, we defined "writing" broadly. When José, who could always be counted on to bring a six-pack of Pacifico, read, he sort of hunched over his pages—not in a self-conscious way, but like there were some kind of magnetic force pulling him. He chuckled to himself the whole way through.

It was a small epiphany for me. Not only had José written these poems for his own amusement—as opposed to proving our stupidity by baffling us—it was okay to laugh at them. Experimental poetry could be funny! It was *supposed* to be weird. Also, it was not "breaking the rules" to enjoy certain kinds of work in certain forms. I could shrug at José's poems on the page and dig them at The Pig.



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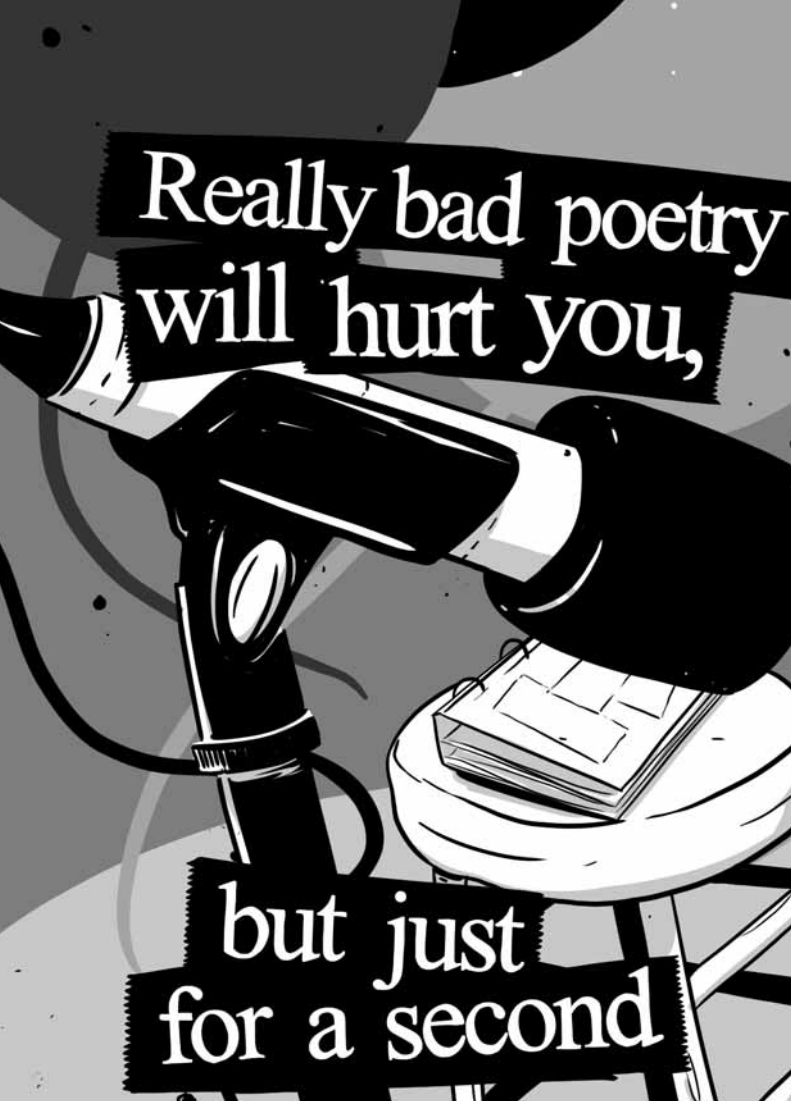
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WHOA...



Jen Hofer is a contemporary CalArts professor who does things like write and knit long scrolls of words in the middle of architectural landmarks. One of her current projects involves reading her own scripts over footage of old war movies. Back in the day, this was how people in foreign countries watched American movies—someone would just stand there explaining what was happening on screen. Hofer's project can turn a heroic image tragic, spooky, or ironic. It also addresses a situation many in the poetry world are afraid to confront: *When you're listening to poetry, it's nice to have something to look at other than the poet, just standing there.*

At its heart, "experimental" means putting process before product. The writer starts something without knowing where it will lead (so, arguably *all* writing is experimental). Sometimes it leads to the poetic equivalent of cold fusion—i.e., a bunch of bullshit. Sometimes it leads to poems like the one I saw Terrance Hayes read last March in Pasadena.

"Wigphrastic" responds to an art piece by Ellen Gallagher, which depicts eyeless women in cartoonish, futuristic yellow wigs. Full of puns and pop culture references, the poem is one part critical theory, one part jazz riff:

...Somebody slap me. Norman Mailer's essay,
The White Negro: Superficial Reflections on the Hipster,
never actually uses the word wigger. I'd rather say *whack*.
It may be fruitful to consider me a philosophical psychopath.

We clubbing in our wigs of pleas and pathological
coulda-woulda-shouldas. Oblong with longing.
Some of the ladies are wigs of No Nos and nots,
knots of nots: do nots, cannots, aughta nots....

I like Hayes because he's political but never didactic. He's serious about his topics, but he turns them over and over like a puppy examining a chew toy, never too serious about himself or where this all might take him. His wit is as sharp as that puppy's teeth.

Also in the category of "experimental-ish poets with soul" is Allison Benis White, whose first collection *Self-Portrait with Crayon* sidles up to the heady subject of her mother's abandonment by looking at Degas's pretty paintings of ballerinas, among other pieces. Her neat box-shaped prose poems can be dense, not because they toy with the meaning of meaning the way true experimenters do, but because they go so deep into gesture and feeling that everyday things become almost unrecognizable, stripped down to their essence. Like seeing bones without skin.

"Horse with Lowered Head" describes holding a delicate sculpture, and Melanie Klein's theory of object relations:

...The sway, for instance, of a long cornsilk mane. Which was not real. As in the thumb which replaces the nipple when the self becomes a circle. As in the mouth of a horse in the shape of a thimble. I could place my thumb inside my mouth to end the sound. But God is endless. Like fingers curling over inconsolable stones. Or a hand, finally, closing around the neck of a horse. Because I cannot hurt her enough to grow old. Surely we have tipped over by now.

Do I know what, exactly, "inconsolable stones" are? No. But this poem feels to me like a primal scream for the mother we all start losing the moment we leave the womb. According to Klein—well, according to what I gleaned from my therapist girlfriend when she was reading Klein—the process of growing up basically involves being totally, umbilically merged with your mom, then getting mad at your mom's boob for not always being there to feed you, then eventually learning to feed yourself. But if the boob leaves too soon, how can you ever trust or rebel or do any of the other things you're supposed to do in uncomfortable tandem with your mother?

5. So You Want to Read/Hear Some Poetry

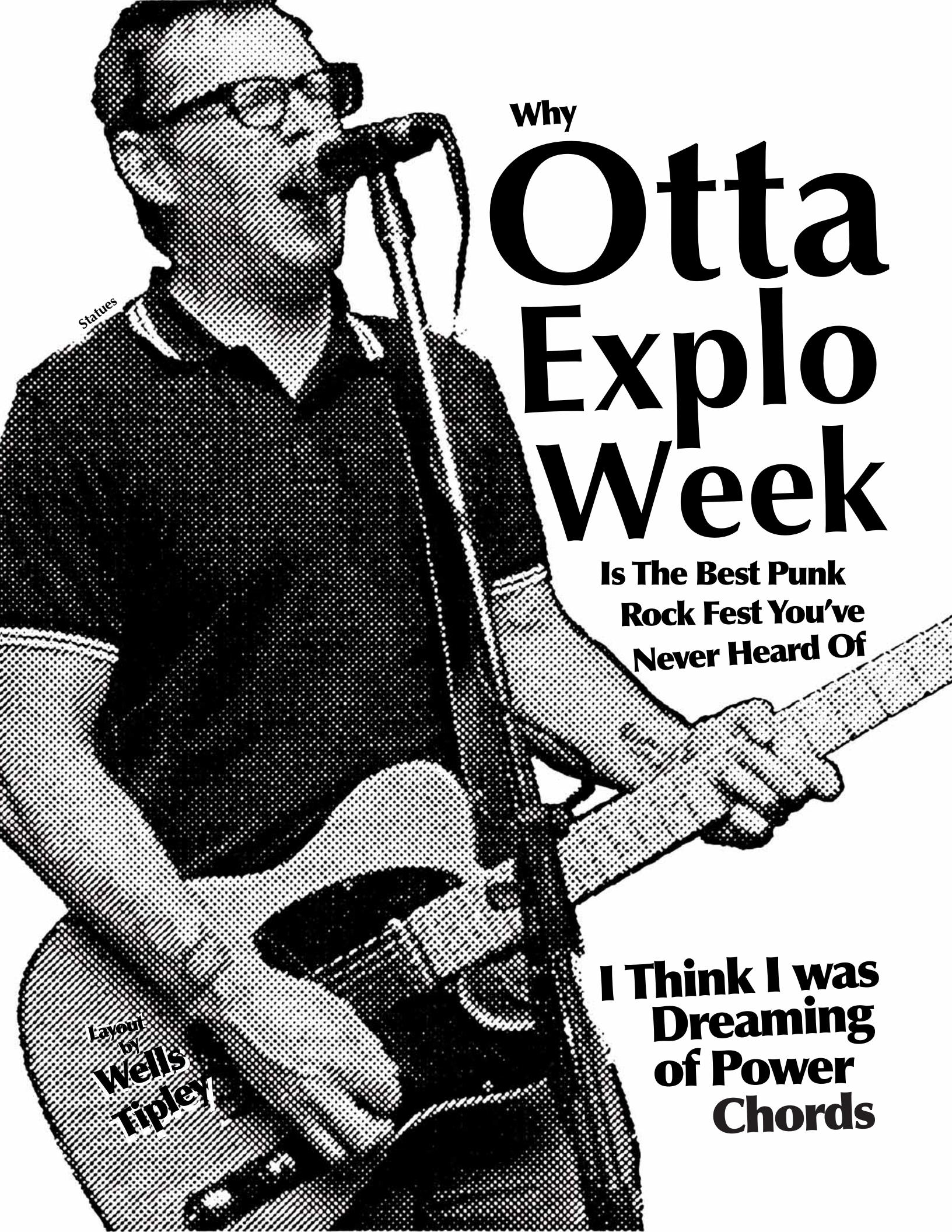
If you're still reading, you must be reasonably certain that poetry won't hurt you. (Really bad poetry will hurt you, but just for a second.) But how should you develop your own random list of six or seven poets who quietly rock your world? Unfortunately, visiting the poetry section of the last Barnes & Noble in town will probably turn up a lot of *Norton Anthology*-type authors, plus Jewel and James Franco.

A better bet is to check out *Poets & Writers'* yearly list of debut poets; if you're like me, the first thing you'll do is scan each profile for the author's age to see if he or she is younger than you (thirty years after the talent show, I'm still a competitive fucker), but after that there will be interesting words and ideas. There are some good online review journals and literary blogs with consistently interesting recommendations with an indie bent, like *Gently Read Literature* and HTMLGIANT (though it sometimes feels a bit clique-ish and Brooklyn-y). Harriet feels slightly more canonical, probably because it's published by the Poetry Foundation, which is the only literary organization in the world that has more money than it knows what to do with, but the blog is always interesting and well written.

Go to your local version of the Hungry Mind. Have a hungry mind. Bring a notebook. When the caffeine kicks in and you get that antsy feeling in your stomach, write.

Endlinks

- Poets.org, especially "Essays & Interviews": poets.org/page.php/prmID/57
- Poets & Writers: pw.org
- Writer's Almanac: writersalmanac.publicradio.org
- Gently Read Literature: gentlyread.wordpress.com
- HTMLGIANT: htmlgiant.com
- Harriet: poetryfoundation.org/harriet



Why
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Explo
Week**

**Is The Best Punk
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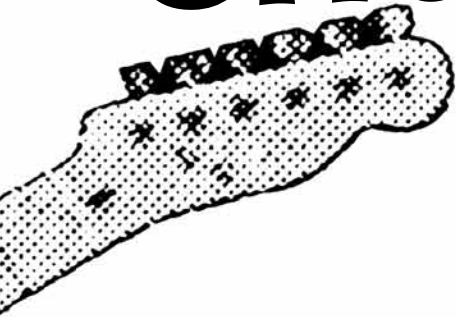
**I Think I was
Dreaming
of Power
Chords**

Statues

Layout
by
**Wells
Tipley**

Hug It Out

wa sion end



"I have a story about Ottawa Explosion!"

My friend Megan wasn't on my interview list. She'd attended the Ottawa Explosion Weekend every year, like almost everyone else we know, though she hadn't ever been super involved. But she was quick with a story.

"We were at a show at Mavericks one night and this one guy—there's always one guy—was being too rough in the pit, smashing everyone and dancing really aggressively. People were getting pissed off, so the bouncer moved in to remove him. The guy got really angry at the bouncer and started yelling and threatening him. Then, out of nowhere, Emmanuel appears and just grabs the aggressive guy in a big bear hug and starts saying, 'Hug it out, man. Just hug it out.' And the guy calmed down. He went back to the pit and behaved himself for the rest of the show."

What is now known as Ottawa Explosion Weekend started as a fairly small, two days of shows in Ottawa. Over its five years of development, its changed names, organizers, and venues, but its spirit remains the same. Spend a weekend going totally crazy to all your favorite bands and, if you start to get agitated, someone will probably hug you.

Now featuring over a hundred bands playing in up to ten different venues over five days, Ottawa Explosion Weekend is on the verge of losing its local-secret status. Bands and attendees are now showing up from the U.S. and Europe, flooding into Canada's capital city for these few days of phenomenally organized and well executed punk rock shows. Not bad for a city that gets ragged on by the rest of the country for being stodgy and boring. Maybe those other cities don't know how much fun we're having. Maybe they're just jealous.

Hug it out, Rest of Canada. Hug it out.

Interviews by
Jennifer Whiteford

Marc
Photos by **Gärtner**



Emmanuel Sayer: Co-organizer / Crusades, Sedatives
Alanna Why: Writer, zine maker / enthusiastic attendee
Rob Seaton: Musician / Statues, Strange Attractor, The Joliettes
Sarah Wotherspoon: Musician / The Johnnies / volunteer
Mickey Marie: Musician / Nervosas, New Creases
Luke Martin: Co-organizer / White Wires, Street Meat, Million Dollar Marxists

It's an Old Anarchist Joke: Who's in Charge Here?

Emmanuel Sayer: My involvement with Ottawa Explosion? I am... just... it's hard to describe. It's funny because I see other people who work at festivals and it's like, "I'm the artistic director, I'm this, I'm that." I don't know what those things mean. I just book bands, help organize, do everything. It's me and my friend Luke who basically run the festival. We have help from our friend Azarin and a bunch of volunteers.

Alanna Why: My involvement is writer of show reviews, contributor to Ottawa Explosion blog, zine maker, and head bopper. Festival attendee.

Rob Seaton: I've played in three different bands at Ottawa Explosion. I've played with Statues, Strange Attractor, and then I played drums in this other band called The Joliettes. There was one year when I played three sets in three different bands. Which is dumb, because I don't have any business playing in, like, two bands [laughs].

Sarah Wotherspoon: I have been an attendee and a performer and volunteer at Ottawa Explosion. I went to the very first weekend and I've been to every single one since.

Mickey Marie: I'm the guitarist and singer for Nervosas. We played our first Explosion in June 2012. We were invited back last year in 2013 and were jazzed as hell to play again.

Luke Martin: I'm one of three main organizers along with Azarin and Emmanuel.

Different Name, Same Soul

Emmanuel: The festival kind of grew out of a previous festival called Gaga Weekend which was organized by Ian Manhire who sings in The White Wires. He started that in 2008. That happened for three years and is the model that Ottawa Explosion is based.

Luke: I guess we were at South by Southwest four years ago. I play in the White Wires and we did some shows there. While we were there Ian—the main organizer of Gaga Weekend named after his former record label—Going Gaga, he told us that he was too busy to do it. June of 2011 would have been Gaga Weekend Four. He didn't have any issues with us taking it on.

Emmanuel: The name Ottawa Explosion came from a blog I started doing in late 2007, early 2008 to cover what was happening in the city. There was a lot of exciting stuff going on—bands forming—and I wanted to document that because I had recently moved to the city and stuff like that just didn't happen where I'm from. You could feel this excitement in the air. I really wanted to document it. The name's self-explanatory. Then it turned into Ottawa Explosion Weekend for the festival—which I don't regret—it's funny because there's a festival called Halifax Pop Explosion and people think that's why we named it that. Other than that, it's an apt descriptor.

Luke: Ian had a specific idea of what he wanted to do and the three weekends he organized, they were great. It was ninety percent local bands. From the get-go, we wanted to bring in bands from farther away. So we brought Bad Sports from Texas and Heavy Cream from Nashville as well as a bunch of bands from Ontario and across Canada. That was the first year.

This One Time, at Ottawa...

Sarah: The first year I remember there was a house party across the street from the police station [laughs]. The Visitors played and I was kind of newish to the scene. I didn't know a lot of people then. I'd just started making friends in the scene because it was the same kind of people who went to the Rock'n'roll Pizza Party, which was a DJ or band night that happened every Thursday.

Emmanuel: As cheesy as it sounds, the early festival days were all very memorable because the first year the Friday night show was pretty much a three-band house party. So to think that it started from that, and has gotten to where it is, which is not huge, but a bit bigger than that, and I think that's pretty neat. As far as memorable shows, though, the White Wires kind of always stole it for me because that was the band that kind of rallied everybody around. When Ian was booking the festival what was so neat was that his band never headlined, even if it was the band that everyone wanted to see. One year, they played in what was basically a garage at two PM and it was amazing seeing the crowd freak out. Seeing people crouch down and then jazz hands and then raise them up in perfect time was kind of exciting.

Rob: I've been a part of every one. When Statues first started playing in Ottawa, one of our very first tours was doing an eastern Canadian tour and I remember getting a Myspace message from Steve Adamyk, who I probably had met years earlier when he was playing in the (Million Dollar) Marxists. He messaged us saying, "If you guys ever want an Ottawa show, we'll book a show for you." So we did that. We played in the basement at Endhits (local record store). It was fucking awesome because we showed up and we didn't know anyone. Going to Toronto was easy 'cause we knew a bunch of people, going to Hamilton was easy, going to London, Ontario was easy, going to



Emmanuel Sayer and Skottie Lobotomy

He just kind of showed up
and he was
poking around at
Vertigo Records
saying, "Okay!
I'm from
Switzerland."



places like that was easy. But coming this way was always intimidating because we didn't know anybody. So we showed up here and it was right when everyone was getting together and doing Sedatives and that whole scene just took off. And we got ingratiated into that for some reason. And it was awesome.

Alanna: In the tenth grade, I really wanted to go to Ottawa Explosion but my mom wouldn't let me 'cause I didn't have any friends and she only said I could go if I had a friend. And then in the eleventh grade I even put up posters for it, but I went on a trip to Cuba the week that it was happening, which never happens for me. I don't travel! So finally last year was the first year that I went to Ottawa Explosion.

Mickey: Emmanuel initially emailed me asking if my previous band New Creases could play. I told him that, sadly, New Creases was no more but that I had a new band. We hadn't even recorded demos yet but he was still interested. I remember being absolutely thrilled because I love Ottawa bands and the fact that we had a possible in to playing with some got me all excited. I had not even been to Canada before, even though I grew up in Cleveland.

From Switzerland with Love

Emmanuel: The first year, the festival was basically just cobbled together in two months, but that started building the interest. In 2012, people from other countries started coming. The big thing that year was that this kid had flown in from Switzerland. He just kind of showed up and he was poking around at Vertigo Records saying, "Okay! I'm from Switzerland." He was just like, super pumped and he ended up writing a huge article in a zine called *Corporate Rock Knockout*. He did a whole diary of being at Ottawa Explosion that year. I think he was just one of those people who followed the Ottawa scene. There's been a connection with Germany for a while now since P. Trash starting putting out records for Ottawa bands. He started with putting out the Statues. Statues actually paved the way for that connection. Then a 7" for my old band the Sedatives. After that, he put out stuff for Mother's Children and then Ottawa Explosion bands who aren't from Ottawa, like Fear Of Lipstick from Moncton.

Rob: They think we're famous, the bands that go over there. Honestly, they think that the bands that come from here to go over there and tour there—they think they're meeting famous people. It's strange because it goes against everything that anybody who comes from our scene is about. There's a difference between popularity and being famous. But

I think the internet's also changed all of that. When people are willing to travel for something like that, I think it's just indicative of having the means to do so and being able to have a connection to it.

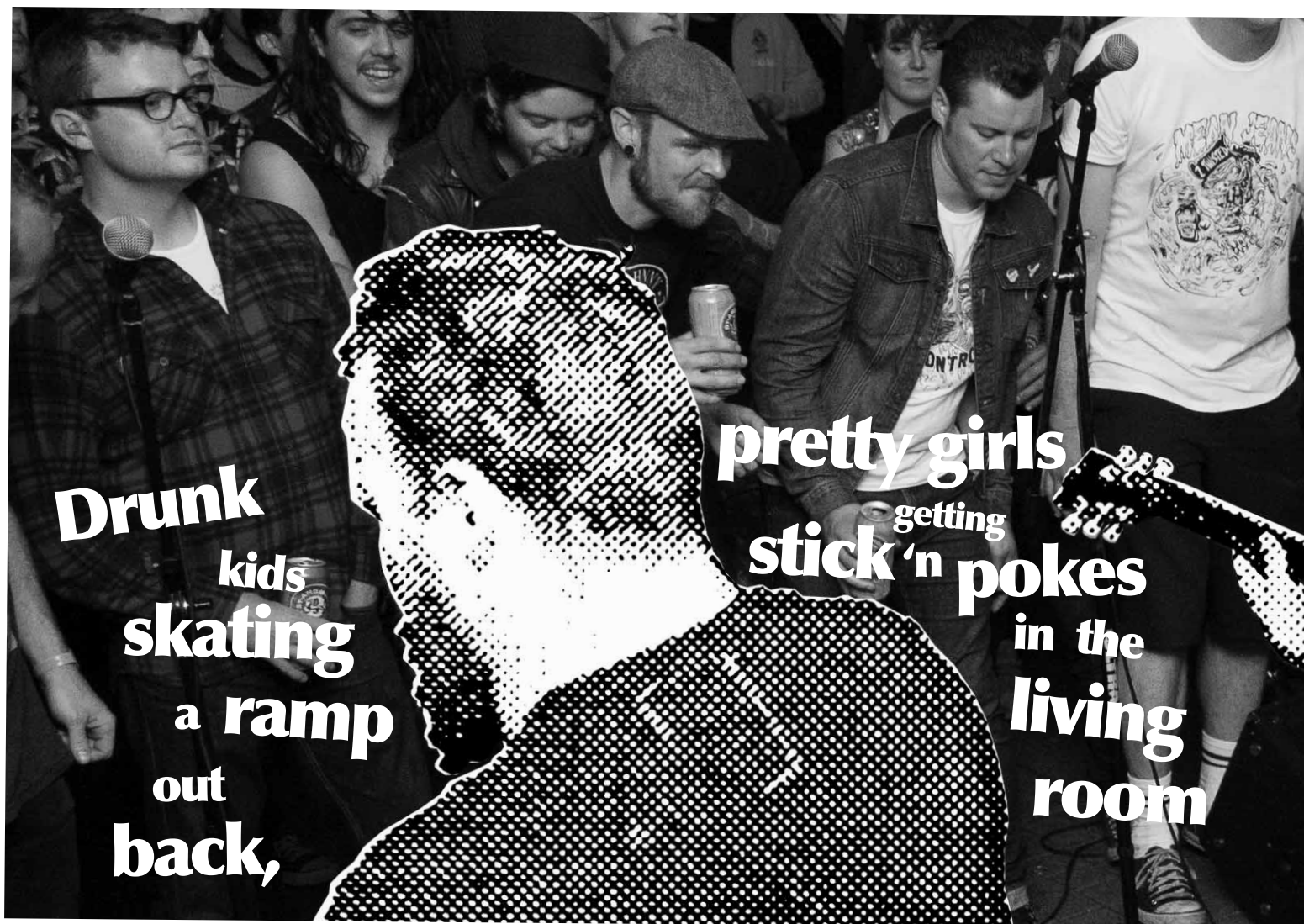
Punk Rock Animal House

Mickey: I knew Ottawa had amazing bands, but I did not know it had an amazing scene. We were in all your bars and all of your DIY spots throughout the fest and I continued to be impressed. Getting drunk was way more expensive but I can deal with that. Also that four AM house show when Mean Jeans played was something out of a movie. Drunk kids skating a ramp out back, pretty girls getting stick 'n pokes in the living room, Strange Attractor guys trying to give away all their warm Guinness. Y'all know how to party, too!

Emmanuel: Fun Boy Clubhouse, where the (local band) New Swears live, is just a crazy party house where they have shows in the basement that are just maniacal. We had Mean Jeans come two years ago and they were going to be in town two days before, so we were like, "Oh, we should have them play a house show after the late show at the bar," so we thought, "Who would have a late night party?" Of course these guys were down. Mean Jeans playing in their basement? Great! So Mean Jeans ended up playing in a tiny, cramped basement with a million people there and people were just going crazy. All these people from out of town were like, "Holy..." because it's basically just a punk rock *Animal House* and I remember talking to someone the next night who said it was hilarious because there was always someone tattooing someone else with a circle of people around them and only two people were stoked: the person getting tattooed and the person doing the tattooing. Everyone else was dismayed. Just seeing that band in the basement in the middle of that crazy scene and walking home to the sun coming up was pretty good.

A Tale of Two Shows

Sarah: I remember the first show I played at Ottawa Explosion was in The Johnnies at Cafe Dekcuf. We played before the Kamalas who are a band from New Brunswick (Canada, not New Jersey). That was the first time I'd seen them and they blew me away. They were also super nice, we've become friends since then. That was one of the first shows I played, ever. The next time I played at the Explosion was the next year, 2012, and I played with a broken foot. I was in a cast. It



Drunk
kids
skating
a ramp
out
back,

pretty girls
getting
stick 'n pokes
in the
living
room

was still fun, but it was difficult to set up gear and I felt silly 'cause I had four guys helping set up my drum kit and I was like, "This isn't normally how it goes. I'm not some kind of diva." [laughs] It was fine, though, because the foot in the cast was my high hat foot, so I was able to do it.

Rob: I think I've played my best show in Ottawa and my worst show in Ottawa. The worst show was an Explosion show. It was the year before our last show and I remember we worked this out on the way down—we hadn't practiced for weeks—and I am terrible with muscle memory, like I really have to practice a lot. If I don't practice then I'm fucking terrible. And I remember saying to Jeff—we were standing up getting ready to play—"We should just pretend that we're fighting and it will take the emphasis off the fact that we're shitty and maybe it will give everyone an idea as to why we're shitty." I remember after the show and we kinda played it up a bit. Mitch wasn't really on board. I don't know if Jeff was on board either, but I just kept directing everything at him. At the end of the show I said to Dave Williams, who is always incredibly honest and humbling sometimes—"Well, that wasn't very good" and he was like, "Naw... it wasn't your best show." [laughs] Which is perfect, because it was exactly what I needed to hear.

Alanna: The Holy Cobras show on the Friday night was insane. It was at Club Saw and it was the same night as the summer solstice. They had a fog machine and crazy effects pedals and the lead singer was like "If you have any drugs TAKE THEM NOW!" and I was just like, "What is happening? This is the best." Everyone in the pit had a vacant expression on their face because they were so into it. And then I also really liked New Swears who played the Saturday afternoon.

I've seen them probably six or seven times and that sticks out as a very memorable show. Davey came out in a priest's outfit before it happened and he married the band to the audience. And there was so much toilet paper thrown about and they had rings for the wedding and plastic blow up beach toys that were being thrown around. And it was the best thing of my entire life.

One Big Punk Family

Rob: I know there are a lot of different scenes in every city. The one we hooked into here in 2006 was filled with a whole bunch of people who were completely genuine, incredibly outgoing, very helpful, and super talented. So it was awesome for us to be ingratiated into the scene. We weren't from here, but when we came here, we felt like we were long-lost brothers showing up at home.

Alanna: I remember Erin—who was performing for the first time with Black Tower, and she was also in the Visitors—they played the first night of Ottawa Explosion, which, by the way, was my last day of high school. She was just like, "Happy Ottawa Explosion everyone! It feels like Christmas!" And it did feel like Christmas. It just felt like a big family reunion. Even though I hadn't really gone to shows earlier, I just loved all the bands for so long that it just felt like family. Everyone's just hanging out and having a good time outside.

Emmanuel: For me, I feel like this is fighting against adversity. I'm not from here. I moved here to play in a band and, to this day, I still can't quite comprehend the city. I can't comprehend how a city of this size is, and the national capital, doesn't have, like, a weekly newspaper. There isn't a source to find out about events. You need to know what's going on. Anyone from outside the city thinks it sucks



because they don't know how to find what's happening. People who live in the city think it sucks because they don't know where to find out what's happening. The impression is this boring government town. So there's that idea to fight against.

Alanna: I think what the scene really needed was cohesion and Ottawa Explosion really brings that.

Luke: We're not pretending to be anything we're not. It's just a bunch of bands, a variety of different versions of rock'n'roll, just coming together and having fun. Because Emmanuel and I have varying tastes when it comes to music, we can strive to be versatile without trying to be everything to everybody. If you try to appeal to every single person, you're in a real danger of not making anybody want to go.

Emmanuel: Who's welcome? Anyone who wants to hang out and have a good time. Who's not welcome? Anyone who wants to stop us from having a good time. So, people complaining about noise, those people are not welcome. I don't care who comes to the festival, what they look like or dress like. Just as long as no one acts like a jerk.

We're Staying at Luke's Mom's House!

Rob: One of my favorite things about coming here is that we always stay at Luke Martin's mom's house. Even last year, when he wasn't living there, we got the keys. When we stayed there, it was just us, Ken from Dirtmap and another band. I don't think there was any other place we've stayed here. When we came through with Tranzmitors, they were like, "Hey, do we have a place to stay tonight?" and we were like, "Aw yeah! A great place! We're staying at Luke's mom's house!" [laughs] So yeah, as years have gone on, more bands have

stayed there. You don't know who is staying there and you wake up in the morning and you go downstairs and you open a beer and you just meet a whole bunch of great people because they're in the same house with you. I think that Emmanuel and Luke have made the whole thing into a really easy experience. It's easy to play it and it's also easy to attend.

Luke: My mom actually moved out of her own house before I did. She got married almost fifteen years ago to my stepfather who lives in the States, so my brother and I lived there until ten years ago and then I basically took over the house. I'm pretty lucky. And I've had bands crashing there pretty regularly since then. It's a really nice house and it pretty much just turns into a million drunk musicians on every floor, on every couch. I actually don't end up spending that much time there. I don't know what they do while they're there. I'm at the festival, usually from noon until three in the morning. If they're partying, they do a good job of cleaning up by the time I get home. Everybody's super respectful.

Mickey: Ottawa Explosion is the first fest we ever played and it kind of sparked this idea in Nervosas that we could be a really good band. I think our reception at the fest inspired us to continue at full speed and tour more. You really put the idea into our heads that we were a good band [laughs]. The only drawback as a musician is getting drunk. More drink tickets please? I will tip in toonies!

Alanna: The festival itself is really cheap. For the amount of bands you get to see, it's ridiculous. I think he booked over a hundred bands last year and it was sixty bucks. That's not even a dollar a band. That's insane.

Emmanuel: Some people wanna make running a festival their job, so if I counted every hour that I worked and tried to pay myself minimum wage, does it break even? No. But are we paying money out of pocket? No. That's good. We might also try to throw a few shows in advance this year to try to raise a bit of money just to make sure we have that extra padding. But we try to keep the budget really low and a lot of the local bands have played for free, or played just to get bracelets, so that helps out a lot. We don't really have sponsors. Luke kind of sponsors us by lending us gear from his practice space but he's one of the organizers so that makes sense. We've worked with a beer company to get some discounted things.

Luke: Honestly, hanging out in the daytime with a few hundred people just watching bands on Saturday is really cool. It's ten dollars to get in, if you just want to go to one show. It's been ten dollars to get in every year and you could literally watch bands from noon until two o'clock in the morning. It's pretty hard to get anything else close to that.

Sarah: That Saturday afternoon show is open air so you can watch a band and be really into them or you can stand back and just talk to people. That allowed me to meet all these people and just get to talk to them and not be at a dark bar shouting at two in the morning.

There's a Lot of Women Here

Alanna: A really cool thing that I saw last year was that it seemed like every band had at least one female member. And I know it may not seem like a lot—they just have one female bass player—but it's a lot. It really matters. Because it's like, "I could do this too."

Sarah: I have definitely noticed that women are really involved in Ottawa Explosion. Like think of the years when we'd go to Kelp (another local record label) shows and Liz (of the Banditas) would be the only woman in any of the bands and there would be a handful of women in the audience who consistently went. But when Ottawa Explosion started and when I was a part of it, that's when I really noticed how many women were in bands and playing music. It's funny, no one else really seemed to think it was that big a deal. They were like, "Yeah? So?" But I thought it was great. It was something new to me because I had seen very few women playing music at the shows I'd been to.

Emmanuel: I think we've just fostered a good environment (for women at the shows). It hasn't been really a huge effort. I don't think about it, but me and Luke have talked about it before like, "You know, there *are* a lot of women here." And women play, but it's not a conscious decision, where we need parity.

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Post-Ottawa-Explosion-Depression

Sarah: When it's over, that's when the depression starts. It lasts the whole week afterwards. Because it's honestly something that a whole bunch of us look forward to. That one weekend in June and that's summer. It's funny because I always feel like it's the height of summer, but it's really just the beginning. I don't think it's even actually summer yet because it happens mid-June and summer, I guess, starts at the end of June. There's this feeling of, "Now what are we going to do? Now what do I have to look forward to?" It's just so good when you're in it.

Alanna: On the last day, everyone was just so burnt out and Roberta Bondar who are like a spacey, noisierock band, they played last, and Emmanuel was handing out cupcakes during it and they had a fog machine too and everyone was just in a vortex, eating cupcakes and watching this band play in a whirl of fog. It was so good. I was really tired, so on one hand I was glad that it was done. On the other hand I was like, "That was awesome. I can't wait until next year." I live my life in a perpetual state of excitement for the next Ottawa Explosion Weekend.

Rob: I'm completely sated by Sunday afternoon when we start driving home because I'm usually hungover and tired and haven't slept enough. But by Wednesday the let-down sets in. I think it's a different experience for me because at the end of it you're like, "Huh. That was really good. I feel really good about it. I've got to find a way to make that happen again." But that's a really particular experience that happens, so you have to kind of massage it a little bit. There's definitely a post-Explosion hangover.

Mickey: I'm hungover and sad and wishing I had spent more money at Vertigo Records.

Sorry Guys, We Can't Run on Punk Time

Emmanuel: I've got to give a huge credit to our volunteers, especially a good friend of ours, Pierre Richardson who does Bruised Tongue, a record label here. He basically stage managed the 2013 main stage every single day, including the Saturday day when it went from noon 'til one AM. And he took care of it like a champ, so he was amazing. But that's something that I'm always proud of, is that it always runs on time. At worst, the last show might go a half hour off. That's something that I take pride in. I think it's also the fact that everyone there who's playing is all about it as well. Everyone's in it together. Everyone wants to be part of it. We are pretty deliberate as to who plays, so there's no one who's going to solo for twenty minutes past their set or anything like that.

Alanna: After I'd been to the first one, Emmanuel sent me an email saying, "What did you like about it? What could we improve on?" and I was like, "I couldn't believe how organized it was." Things started on time. That doesn't happen at punk shows, ever. Everything is four hours late. I got to the gate and I'd bought my ticket already and they had it ready for me and there was food and there was water and there was a bathroom. It's just no frills, bare bones, but super organized and good.

Come Here Often?

Rob: In 2013 I pulled the van up in front of Saw Gallery on Friday evening. We had gear to unload and there's a point on any trip when I can't just wait to get the hell out of the van. I stepped out to the sidewalk and saw a familiar face working the ticketing gate outside of Saw. The relief of being done with the drive and seeing Sarah just made me smile so big. We'd met and briefly spoken over the years at Statues shows when we played Ottawa.

Sarah: I had seen him at shows for years. He's been at every single Ottawa Explosion as part of Statues or Strange Attractor. And we had kind of talked. I didn't think he really knew who I was.

Rob: The following day, back at Saw for the day show, I was standing off to the side of the stage on the grass. I noticed Sarah was standing close by and being a friendly guy just said, "Hey, how's it going?" I don't remember what bands we watched, but we chatted through most of them and she bought me a drink.

Sarah: I was single after a really long relationship and he was single after a really long relationship and we started chatting and really hit it off.

Rob: Later that evening at Maverick's, we ran into each other again and she showed me her OXW spreadsheet. I was suitably impressed. I would normally just wander around, half dazed. This lady was organized. We talked about some of our favorite shows of the weekend and watched more bands. At the end of the night, I told her it was great to hang out and that it'd be fun to do it again sometime. As I was supposed to be retiring completely from playing music, I wasn't quite sure that it would ever happen. If nothing else, I had a great time and potentially a new friend.

Sarah: At the very end of the festival he said, "Do you want to hang out?" And it was two in the morning. I was like, "I would love to, but my back is killing me. I really need to go lie down." So I went home and I was like, "What the fuck did I just do?" So I got his email address and I emailed him the very next day.

Rob: I got home Sunday to an email from Sarah waiting in my inbox. That email changed my life. Ottawa Explosion Weekend has spawned some amazing bands, collaborations and memories. It can now add love to its CV.

Sarah: Honestly, I don't think it would have happened without Ottawa Explosion.

Things started
on time.
That doesn't
happen
at

Mickey Marie
Nervosa

punk
shows,
ever.

Following the demise of the Dissimilars, their bass player Hadi Fever planned to start up a new garage punk band in the same vein. After the musicians he recruited fell off board, Hadi marched on ahead, playing his songs as a one-man band under the moniker, the Stalins Of Sound. Hadi sang and played guitar with a drum machine and some programmed backing tracks out of necessity and sense of will, serendipitously morphing into a completely new and original synth punk outfit.

I saw the Stalins in this early incarnation and was surprised by just how much sound was coming out of Hadi as a one-man band; songs intricately and richly textured and layered in many ways—much more so than many full bands. And, of course, there was the intriguing nature of the drum machine. Always on time, never too drunk to remember how the song goes, punishingly brutal without tiring by the end of the show. This wasn't just karaoke: this was a fierce rock'n'roll assault.

Soon after playing shows around San Diego, Hadi converted a couple other musician friends to join the fold, building the band even bigger each time. First was Davie Death Metal on bass. Then came former Dissimilars frontman Jimmy the Worm, now manically manning the synthesizers with the same aggression and showmanship with which he took the microphone in the Dissimilars. Now fully formed, Stalins are a slick, sleek, fine-tuned machine, dressed head to toe in black uniforms, befitting the dictatorial imagery suggested by the band's name, blasting darkly tongue-in-cheek and crucially vital synth punk across the Western United States.

Interviewed by Jeff Proctor
Photos by Paul Silver
Layout by Matt "Rock Tsar" Average

Interviewed are:
Hadi Fever—Vocals, guitar
Jimmy the Worm—Keyboards, synths,
drum machine

STALINS OF SOUND

Jeff: You guys were both in the Dissimilars together. And the Dissimilars kinda took a break around 2005, is that right?

Hadi: 2008, I think.

Jeff: Was Stalins happening concurrently?

Hadi: Not really. Jimmy and I would stay around after band practice and play some songs with Jimmy playing stand-up drums and me playing guitar, but that wasn't really the Stalins Of Sound.

Jeff: So, did Stalins evolve out of this?

Hadi: Not really. Stalins Of Sound ended up being, when I met Dave [Davie Death Metal, Stalins bass player] through this metal head friend of ours who would smoke weed and play, what's that fucking video game called, the war game and all shoot 'em up?

Jimmy: Halo?

Hadi: No.

Jimmy: Call of Duty?

Hadi: Yeah. He was unemployed for like two years and would just smoke weed and play Call of Duty. I would go over to his house to play guitar with him. Dave was there playing bass with him. They were playing slow and doomy metal stuff and I said, "Eh, you know what? Let's play something fast and heavy." So we started that out and then Christian—that was the guy's name—he didn't want to do it anymore. So, I just kept playing with Dave. Then Dave dropped out a little bit. Then I did Stalins as a one-man band thing for a little while. I think my first show was in July 2009 for the first Johnny Rad Fest [skateboarding and garage rock fest held over the summer in San Diego] and then in January 2010 it was me and Dave playing together.

Jimmy: I started practicing with you in February 2011 and I think my first show was shortly thereafter.

Hadi: With Cedar Fire and Tacocat.

Jeff: The band name was originally going to be Stallions of Sound?

Hadi: No, that was Tyrone Taylor—Lurkville Skateboards and Johnny Rad Fest organizer) and Ryan Wong (Ryan Rousseau of the Wongs, Reatards, Lost Sounds, etc). They just used that name to make fun of us.

Jeff: Where did the Stalins name come from?

Hadi: It's lifted from this online report from the *Asia Times*—this English language Chinese newspaper—was talking about how censorship in music in post-Soviet Russia was even worse than during the Soviet era and he said, regarding the music censors,





“Who are these guys, the Stalins of sound?” And I read that and went “ding!”

Jeff: So, Stalin isn’t quite as unpopular as other murdering dictators.

Jimmy: He’s actually one of the more popular murdering dictators.

Hadi: Which is bizarre because he actually killed a lot more people than Hitler did.

Jimmy: I think it’s the mustache.

Jeff: Has there ever been anyone that was offended, like, “My parents were in the gulag!”

Hadi: I haven’t gotten anybody like that. Stalins Of Sound doesn’t mean we like Stalin or that we’re Stalinists. Some of us, specifically me, might be left-leaning, left-inclined, but I would be a Leninist if anything. But the band doesn’t have anything to do with political ideology at all.

Jeff: But, the name does play in with the aesthetic.

Hadi: Oh yeah. I think the aesthetic is very appealing. The aesthetic is kind of like my perspective in life, to be very full-on in

everything. I see totalitarian dictators as people who are very intense and I aspire to be that [laughs]. This is coming out to be very, very strange.

Jeff: Don’t worry about it, it’s good. So, as far as the instrumentation of the band, there’s vocals and guitar, bass, synthesizer and drum machine with no physical drummer. I feel like it fits in with the aesthetic. Having a cold, emotionless drum machine fits in with the cold, emotionless dictator. Was that intentional?

Hadi: It wasn’t intentional, but it worked out perfectly. Originally, I envisioned it to be like a garage punk band, kind of along the lines or in continuation of the Dissimilars. And the fact that it turned into this cold, emotionless, full-on gnarly thing. I think it ended up being more a reflection on my internal outlook on life, where I’m kind of like emotionless. I’ve been compared to Data from Star Trek.

Jimmy: But not nearly as charming

Everyone: [Laughter]

Hadi: No, not nearly as charming at all.

Jeff: It is a high benchmark. Jimmy you grew up in San Diego’s East County. And at some point, Hadi, you also moved to San Diego East County.

Hadi: Yeah. I moved to San Diego in 1998 from El Paso, Texas. I actually lived in the same room that Jimmy lived in, in El Cajon after he moved in with his girlfriend.

Jimmy: Hadi and I met in a math class at Grossmont College in the fall of ‘99 and Hadi was at the time, like nineteen or twenty?

Hadi: Nineteen.

Jimmy: I was twenty-two and was going to a lot of punk shows at the time and Hadi was not. [Laughs] I don’t know how to tell this story without embarrassing you.

Jeff: You’re allowed to embarrass, please.

Jimmy: Hadi’s favorite band was like Korn or Marilyn Manson.

Jeff: Uh huh.

Jimmy: And he would try to talk me into to me how great these bands were. At that point I didn’t give a shit anymore. Had we met a few years previously, I would’ve been like [angrily] “No way dude!” and argue with him. But now I’m just like, “Yeah, that stuff sucks,” and that’s the end of that. But Hadi seemed like he was really trying to win me over.

And then it ended up going in the other direction. Because I would always talk about the Dwarves and bands like that a lot and then Hadi started listening to that and he found out that he loved it. And from there we started playing together. It would be a long time. We attempted to do a band a few times but nothing got off the ground. We would practice with other guys but nothing would ever go anywhere.

When the Dissimilars came along, the original bass player was Zach who moved to Portland. We didn’t want to break up the Dissimilars. We’d only been playing for a year, so I said, “We should bring Hadi in, because he plays well.” Even though you were mostly a guitarist, I knew you’d take bass and handle it with aplomb.

Hadi: Yeah, it was fun actually.

Jimmy: So, that was the first time we actually got something off the ground and that was good.

Hadi: In that math class we had this weird hippy teacher with flip-flops who said, “Break off in groups.” And I looked around me at this sea of East County bimbos and jocks and I saw Jimmy with this Ramones shirt and leaped over.

Everyone: [Laughter]

Jimmy: Yeah, and I just didn’t move. I let everyone else break into groups and was just like, “Eh, somebody will just land over here.”

Jeff: People reading this might not be familiar with San Diego’s East County, El Cajon. Can you guys paint a picture of what it’s like?

Jimmy: Well, I actually live in Spring Valley now and have for the past five or six years, which is still East County. Actually it’s closer to South Bay more than anything else. But yeah, East County, especially when I was living there, mostly in Alpine, but also in El Cajon—it’s pretty white trash and it gets

I don't know how to tell this story without embarrassing you.

really hot and miserable in the summer. But it's really pretty standard suburbia. It's produced a lot of snot-nosed smart asses like myself over the years, I'm sure.

Hadi: Was it you or Travis Brady (Kolob, U.S. Defenders) who said that, "El Cajon is where California stops and America starts"?

Jeff: It was Ferny (Fernando Cruz from Bümklått, Run For Your Fucking Life). He was in jail for a little while and one of the guards asked him where he was from. Ferny said "San Diego," and the guard replied with, "Yeah? Well, I'm from El Cajon. Where San Diego ends and America begins."

Jimmy: [Laughs] They should adopt that as their motto, because that's very accurate. I had a deep and abiding love for El Cajon for all the years I lived there, like a white trash pride sort of thing, like "Yeah, I live in the shitty part of town." [Laughs] But now when I go back—there's a coffee house, like a pancake house that I like out there—I don't miss it, but I don't hate it. It has a bad rap and probably deservedly. But I did kind of wear that on my sleeve for most of my twenties. But now I'm at the point where I don't really care.

Hadi: It was also the meth capital of the country for a while.

Jimmy: Yeah, for a while it was.

Jeff: I'm kind of surprised about that, actually.

Jimmy: Yeah, I am too. [Laughs]

Jeff: For a time, like of our era, our generation, it seems like there were a fair amount of punk rockers, rock and rollers that came out of East County. Do you think there's anything about East County specifically that contributed to that?

Jimmy: Yeah, totally. Well, John Cougar Concentration Camp was from El Cajon or Santee originally. I remember in the early to mid-'90s, when I was in high school, there was a really active scene in El Cajon. There was the Soul Kitchen which was an all-ages place, which had a lot of good bands over the years. That was when punk was "breaking" again and Green Day was big. There was a ton of us little mall rat type kids running around out there. But that was the exact environment that was perfect for... what's the phrase I'm looking for, a boiler?

Jeff: Petri dish?

Jimmy: Yeah, Petri dish. No. A pressure cooker! It's a pressure cooker for that sort of stuff. Because it's boring, miserable. You're

middle class but you're broke and your parents hate you. It's that perfect amount of teen angst and humidity that creates pretty good punk rock.

Jeff: Hadi, what was growing up in El Paso like?

Hadi: Teenage years were pretty much spent just being a pothead. I was in jazz band in high school. [laughs]

Jeff: That also doesn't seem surprising. [laughter]

Jimmy: Look at that cardigan he's wearing. Of course he was.

Hadi: My first concert was Mötley Crüe. 1991 or 1992. With the other singer!

Jeff: Wow! Not even Vince Neil. [laughter]

Hadi: We didn't have that much of a punk rock scene. There was At the Drive-In.

Jimmy: Wasn't your cousin in At the Drive-In?

Hadi: Tony Hajjar (drummer, Sparta). And I saw them before he joined them in like 1994. And that was cool because it was at this place called the Golden Age Center, which was an all-ages place for punk rock bands, or any bands really. And I was fourteen and had never seen anything like this before. I was blown away like, "Who is this band? This is fucking awesome." Seeing that live performance was awesome. El Paso is a desert. It was boring. We would go to the Wal-Mart parking lot for fun, because there was access to the sewers there and we'd go ride our bikes into the sewers.

Jimmy: That does sound like fun.

Hadi: Fire crackers were legal, so we could go and do firecrackers and that was fun. But, other than that, El Paso was a big piece of shit and I'm happy to have moved out.

Jeff: Your mom kind of bribed you to go to church?

Hadi: Yes, she said if I didn't do my confirmation then she wouldn't give me my allowance and that meant I was not able to buy Slayer tapes. And that was a big threat over my head. I kindly obliged, but I wore my upside down cross Slayer shirt to Sunday school every Sunday. I even got approached by my Sunday school teacher and he asked, "Are you really serious about this?" And I said, "No, this is all bullshit, but I'm doing it because my mom asked me to."

Jeff: You came up from more of a metal background, a heshier?

Hadi: Oh, totally.

Jeff: And Jimmy introduced you to a lot of bands. Would you say Ministry is the linchpin between your punk and metal interests?

Hadi: To me, punk ended up meaning what metal was trying to go after, but ended up getting stuck in the minutiae of the details. Punk was the official or original burst of energy that metal tried to be but couldn't be, for one reason or another. So, for me, it was a very natural progression.

Lemmy from Motörhead talks about how metal bands are just punk bands that actually learned to play their instruments. For me it's kind of a symbiotic relationship between punk and metal, or at the very least thrash metal. To me, nü-metal is just horrible.

Jeff: Going back to Ministry, the reason I asked about them is that they're a band that straddles the line between punk and metal, but they are also a band that incorporates a drum machine and synthesizers, and has always had a fairly unique image and aesthetics. They're this abrasive, dark, metallic, mechanical band in much the same way Stalins is. Would you say there's anything in particular about them that inspired what you do in Stalins Of Sound? Or perhaps Big Black? Or other more contemporary bands like Destruction Unit, Digital Leather, or Lost Sounds?

Hadi: All of those bands are actually big-time favorites of mine. But I don't know how honest it would be to say that they inspired The Stalins Of Sound per se, at least with what I originally envisioned, which was a garage punk band with real drums. Later on, we turned into a drum machine band after trying six drummers. Then, I found myself re-listening to all that stuff with a different ear to get ideas on how they used drum machines instead of just listening to them without thinking about that.

Jeff: Regarding your bass player, Dave, I've known him for a long time but I actually know him the least of you guys.

Hadi: He's a man of mystery. I know him the least out of all of us.

Jeff: When Dave was introduced to me, he had been co-workers with a friend of mine who I think moved into one of their apartments when they had a room open up and they said about him, "We have this new roommate. He's kind of weird. He lifts weights, listens to Danzig, and drives a Camaro."

Hadi: Yes.

Jeff: And I thought, "This sounds like the most awesome dude ever. I don't know what you mean by weird." [laughter]

Jimmy: It's only two out of three these days, at least since he got his DUI. The Camaro's off the table.

Jeff: And I talked to Larry (Larry Harmon—*Genetic Disorder*, the Kassos, and Dissimilars) and he also felt like Dave is kind of an enigma.

Hadi: Which is probably why all the girls flock to him.

Jimmy: Well, there's not really much of a mystery with Dave. He's quiet, so people are like, "Ooh, what's his story?" I'm not trying to insult him; he just kinda keeps to himself. If I'm in a comfortable situation, I'll talk you



ear off, but, generally speaking, I'm quiet too. Then every now and again somebody will say, "Oh, I thought you were a lot different." And it's just because I never said anything. But Dave's just a normal dude.

Hadi: He's very reliable, which is something that's been so elusive in music. Actually, all three of us are super fucking reliable which is really, really good, because every other musician I've played with has been a super big flake. So, we're really lucky in that respect.

Jimmy: Trying to start bands when I was younger, that was ninety percent of it, just finding three or four other dudes who would show up. That was really hard. That was when Hadi and I would start doing stuff together. It was kind of a given that we're going to do stuff because we wanted to do it. We weren't going to just not show up. Our friend Mikey who played with us for a while. He just wasn't that into it. We would go months without hearing from him. So we are definitely lucky in that we don't have an actual drummer. And not anything against drummers, but it does mean just one less person you have to worry about.

Jeff: Less gear to haul.

Hadi: Less expensive.

Jeff: You can travel in a car.

Hadi: Well, we can't really travel in a car because when we go live, we have all this stuff here, this whole get-up [points to stacks of amps and speakers], in order to get the sound to be as big—I think we might

even be sounding bigger—than a drum set with all these.

Jimmy: Oh, for sure.

Hadi: So, we need a van.

Jeff: Back to Dave—he's a big sports fan and you guys aren't.

Hadi: I'm definitely not. Jimmy may be in-between.

Jimmy: I dabble a little bit more than Hadi does, yeah.

Jeff: When you guys are on tour, does Dave say like, "We have to find a way for me to watch the Steelers game?"

Jimmy: No, he's not really like that. I wanna say we've been on the road during football season, and he's not made a scene.

Hadi: He has watched porno on his phone, though. [laughter]

Jimmy: That's true.

Hadi: I think he likes porno more than football.

Jimmy: Well, who among us?

Hadi: Who could blame him?

Jimmy: There's very little personality clash in the band. Hadi and I will yell at each other, but that's just part of how we work, right?

Jeff: What kind of reactions do you get from people when they realize you're using a drum machine instead of a live drummer?

Hadi: It's been good. It's usually something like, "Rad! You guys don't have to put up with a drummer?!" Though, we have been getting a fair amount of requests from drummers asking if they can join, but at this

point it seems like it'd alter the dynamic of the band way too much.

Hadi: I think you and I have developed a very good working relationship, ever since the reincarnation of the Racket Girls.

Jimmy: The Racket Girls were the very first band I was in. And ever since then I've wanted to re-use that name. When I met Hadi, that was our working band name for a long time until the Dissimilars came along.

Hadi: I think what's really cool with all three of us, too, but I don't think any of us really have an ego, per se. Of course we have egos, everybody has an ego, but as far as the music is concerned or songs or the band or whatever, if somebody says something is a bad idea then we just say, "Fuck it, that's a bad idea," and move on.

Jimmy: Yeah, that's true. It does help that Hadi does most of the work, really. Dave and I are much more willing to go along. I've been in enough bands now to where I feel like whatever creative needs that I've had to have addressed has happened and I don't need to swing my dick around and say, "I wanna do it my way," because I have had it my way.

Hadi: And if he did want to do it his way, well then, that's okay, too.

Jimmy: I know how to ask without being an asshole about it. Hadi was doing this by himself before Dave and I came along, so there was already sort of an outline as to what was going to happen.



Jeff: In the Dissimilars you were the frontman and Hadi was kind of in the background as the bass player. Now the roles have switched. Hadi is singing and you're in the background as the synths man.

Jimmy: It's totally different and I wouldn't have it any other way. [Laughs]

Jeff: So, you prefer this?

Hadi: I'd actually prefer it the other way. [Laughs]

Jimmy: Well, the Dissimilars was a lot of fun for four years and then we stopped because I wasn't having any more fun. Then I was in Slab City for another couple years. That isn't officially over, we do play very rarely. But when Hadi asked me to join this I said the same thing I said to Ernie (Quintero of Slab City, the Spits) when he asked me to join Slab City. I said, "I'll show up and I'll play but I don't want to do anything else. I don't want to book or be responsible for anything." But it's not as cut and dry as that. I do kick in on that stuff. I had been team leader on the Dissimilars and I didn't want that with this band.

Hadi: Now I know why, being the team leader of Stalins.

Jimmy: It's not as fun as it looks. The Dissimilars, we did just play a show this summer that was a lot of fun; I had forgotten how much fun that was. But that's because the pressure was off. I have much more fun in a band when I'm not in charge.

Hadi: [to Jimmy] I trust your sensibilities very much.

Jimmy: See how well we work together? It's a wonder we haven't murdered each other.

Jeff: You've done two 7"s on Volar Records, which is run by your roommate, Hadi. Craig Oliver (Christmas Island).

Hadi: Who's walking around right there. [Points to Craig as he walks past.]

Jeff: Jimmy, I hear that you do a good Hewhocannotbenamed impersonation.

Jimmy: I do?

Hadi: [Laughs] Oh, I remember this.

Jeff: The story I heard was that you, at a Dwarves show...

Jimmy: [Big burst of laughter] Oh yeah, I forgot about that entirely. The Stalins Of Sound opened the Dwarves show at the Kensington Club in San Diego two summers ago and before the Dwarves took the stage, Blag came up to me and—I guess they had been doing this on the whole tour, where they would ask somebody to get into their underwear and put on the Hewho mask and jump into the crowd at the last song. So he asked me and I said, "But of course, I would be honored sir."

Hadi: Blag has played us twice on his podcast. One time right before playing Pantera's "Fucking Hostile!" [laughs]

Jimmy: That's the weird thing; I met Blag through Chris Fields, my old friend from John Cougar Concentration Camp. He started playing with the Dwarves. So when I first met them, I was trying to be cool like, "Oh hey, you guys are Chris's friends." But on

the inside I was like [squealing] "Eeehehehe, it's the Dwarves!" [laughter] But every time I see Blag now, I'm like, "Hey Blag, how's it going man? What's up?" But on the inside I'm still like, "I can't believe I'm talking to Blag Dahlia and he knows my name." And now it's going to be in print. [Laughs] So I did that dive off the stage. I ended up going into the drum kit to end the set. I was paying for that in the morning, but it was totally worth it. How did I forget about that entirely? Why am I not telling that story every day?

Jeff: On the subject of Hewhocannotbenamed, do you guys know his actual name?

Hadi: Pete.

Jeff: When I found out that was his name, I thought, "His name should not be 'Pete.'" [laughs]

Hadi: I talked to him and had a regular conversation with him at the Casbah. Nobody recognized him, but I did. He's a teacher.

Jimmy: He's a real mild-mannered fellow off-stage

Hadi: Very cool, very intelligent. We talked about history and politics. Very well-informed gentleman.

Jimmy: Vadge Moore is definitely the Dwarviest Dwarve. That guy is not a character at all. They were playing some shows in town, '99 I want to say. I went to the Riverside show and Los Angeles show. They were hanging out at Lancers (San Diego bar) after their San Diego show and Vadge says to me, "Hey man, thanks for coming out to

You're middle class but you're broke and your parents hate you. It's that perfect amount of teen angst and humidity that creates pretty good punk rock.





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the show tonight.” And I said, “I wasn’t at the show tonight.” And he says, “I’ve done so much coke I don’t even know where I am right now.” All the same Vadge stories you’ve read in the pages of *Razorcake*, hearing them from him was a real dork’s dream come true when I was twenty-one.

Jeff: So, back to the band. What’s next? Other plans?

Hadi: I do have goals. I write songs like crazy, that’s one thing I don’t have a shortage of. It’s very easy for me to write songs. That’s something I’ve been doing since I was eleven years old when I first started to play guitar. My goal is to keep putting out vinyl, playing in the band, and putting stuff on record.

Jeff: And everything is written, practiced, and recorded in your room here?

Jimmy: This is truly where the magic happens.

Hadi: This is true bedroom synth punk.

Jimmy: That’s been very convenient, compared to a more traditional band, not having to rent and share a space with another band.

Hadi: Plus having the drum machine, we can just turn down so we don’t have to worry about annoying the neighbors.

Jeff: Is there anything going on now, other bands that you feel like the world should know about, bands you’ve met on the road?

Both: White Murder.

Hadi: I love White Murder. Exorcisms. Who else? Also, Max (Nordile), every band that he’s been in has been great. The Trashies, Uzi Rash Group, Human Waste.

Jimmy: That’s our Oakland connection, Max Trashie.

Hadi: I have not seen anything I have not liked from Max. Everything that I’ve heard from Max I’ve loved.

Jimmy: He’s another San Diego transplant, as well.

Jeff: The Trashies just had a single and video where they name dropped Jimmy the Worm.

Jimmy: That’s me!

Jeff: Which reminds me, where did the Jimmy the Worm nickname come from?

Hadi: He doesn’t like to talk about it.

Jimmy: I was named after my grandmother. [Laughs] There’s really no story to it, which is really the frustrating thing, because everyone assumes there is and there’s really not. The closest thing is I called Chris Fields, who was not home at the time, and

his roommate Ray (Kassos, Short Lived) answered the phone and I left a message with him. And when Chris got home, Ray said, “Somebody named Jimmy called.” Chris asked, “Jimmy who?” and Ray said “Uh...Jimmy the Worm.” And they thought it was funny and so it stuck. And that’s what helped it stick, because at first I hated it, so they delighted in calling me that.

We’re rather blessed, Jeffrey. Ironically enough, since we all worship the devil. God bless you, Jeff.

Jeff: And God bless the Stalins Of Sound. Which I’m sure Mr. Stalin is delighted in our blessing him.

Jimmy: No, thank you. I’m happy, I’m proud to be in the pages of *Razorcake*.

Jeff: And on that note, gentlemen...

Hadi: Thanks, Jeff. That was fun.

Jimmy: Yeah, that was fun.

THE TOUCH OF SOLITARY HYSTERIA CAN TURN INTO A KNOT OF FEAR FOR LESSER HUMANS—musicians without vision, without internal drives. That knot of fear turns into a noose of alienation. Inward silence, emptiness. Off-center circular vortices. A sunless, dimensionless wilderness of thought tumbling to a pinpoint then slowly vanishing to indistinguishable static.

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Mark Ryan is a mad scientist. He tested the silence. He heard something nasty, alien, somewhat Germanic. The transmission was crystal clear without the air noise or bone noise that blurs ordinary transmission. His mind was graph paper. His keyboard, guitar, and voice became transcribing Dictaphones.

Interview with Mark Ryan // Interview, introduction, layout / Todd Taylor
Photos / Peter Salisbury, Renate Winter, David Forcier, and Todd Taylor

A creature approached in deep throbs. It crept from the vast mental darkness and infinite cosmic loneliness. Resinous. Saliva-slicked mouth. A mental roughhouse that lashed thought tendrils and burped out black static clouds. A deathless one? A ghost? An alien? A monster?

And yet there was no confusion in Mark. He captured the creature inside his machines, in his brain, in tubes, on magnetic tape. He caged, reconfigured, calculated, and processed. After moments of desperate resistance, the creature resonated something from the glass. It was bright green, pulsing, alive.

It's something that can't be killed.
It's called music.

MIND SPIDERS

Todd: Let's talk about the transition from The Marked Men to Mind Spiders. My guess is that it was one of the first times that you didn't have a musical partnership with somebody making music.

Mark: Yes, actually. I was out on my own. I hadn't thought of that before because I think that every band I'd been in before, I wasn't the sole songwriter.

Todd: So, you met drummer Mike Throneberry when you were nineteen?

Mark: Yeah, I think you're right.

Todd: So you've had relationships with him and Jeff Burke for almost half of your life?

Mark: Jeff, a little bit later on. I knew Jeff just from the punk scene around Denton. But I really started working with Jeff around '97.

the Mind Spiders, did you ever feel like you were having conversations with Mike? I'm not saying talking to ghosts, like talking to him in your head?

Mark: Sure, Mike's drums are always in my head. I'm used to collaborating with those guys. Like in The Reds, Chris Pulliam would be my bullshit detector. "Nah, man. That's not good. Try this." Or "Let's not do that." And Jeff and Mike, more so in The Marked Men. I would think of those guys sometimes when I'm writing songs. "Would they think this is cool?" That kind of thing. "I wonder if these guys would like that?" I don't know if it's always conscious.

Todd: It's cumulative. You've just spent so much time together. I'm trying to isolate

Johns (Jeff Burke's solo project that has many different musicians when playing live), is that I hear that you guys are *processors*. I catch whiffs of things—Devo or Krautrock or Buddy Holly. In *Inhumanistic*, I hear a lot of Epoxies, but it's definitely through a very processed method. You just don't wholesale rip something off, put it on there, tack it on, and play it. That's what I really appreciate.

Mark: I mean, I hope so. [laughs] Punk rock and rock'n'roll are pretty simple music, so it's hard not to rip something off unintentionally sometimes.

Todd: But I think intentionality is a big part of it. Some musicians steal lock, stock, and barrel and then say, "What? Oh, you've heard of the Rolling Stones? Really?"

It's the Mind Spiders against the humans. And humans kinda suck. **BASICALLY, IN THE END, THE MIND SPIDERS ARE GOING TO WIN.**

He was recording The Reds.

Todd: What was the main challenge in being in a band, like The Marked Men—it seems pretty collaborative from my perspective—to being the sole person making all of the music?

Mark: Well, The Marked Men wasn't too collaborative in terms of songwriting. It's always been a case that we write songs on our own, having pretty much planned out what we want to do, then bring it to the rest of the guys. I was kind of used to that. After The Marked Men were done, I had the idea in my mind that I wanted to create something that was just mine and wouldn't depend on somebody moving away.

Todd: You strike me as someone who is prolific. You probably had some songs that were written during the time of The Marked Men but weren't "Marked Men-able," that weren't fitting perfectly.

Mark: Yeah, definitely. I'd done another band called Crying Jags, just really briefly, with Mike, again on drums, and some other friends of mine. It was just trying out different songs that didn't fit The Marked Men. Other people brought songs into that as well. Actually, a few of the first Mind Spiders songs were re-worked versions of some of the songs I'd worked on. That song, "Worlds Destroyed" was one I had written and it was completely different from when I first wrote it, but then I re-did it for Mind Spiders.

Todd: Did Crying Jags ever release anything?

Mark: No. It was just a for-fun kind of thing.

Todd: Getting back to long-term collaborations. Drummers. Mike. People usually look at the guitarist or the lead singer and they don't realize how important the drummer is to everything, especially someone so talented and so much of a force. When you were doing music specifically for

Mind Spiders for the specific time and the transition. So much time has lapsed since you started playing. When you were alone, sitting to record for the first time, did you feel a bit more free or was it fucking scary?

Mark: I intentionally wanted to try to do something different, for me, from with what I've done before, so it was sort of freeing. It was also a little bit intimidating. When I recorded the song "Worlds Destroyed" that was on the first 7", I had no intention of using it for anything. It was before I think I even had the name for the band.

But when I recorded that, I found that it was something that I really liked. It seemed different than what I'd done before in some ways. It sort of put this idea in my head that maybe I could do something else. It did give me a little bit of freedom, but there was also the thought in my mind: "Will anybody like this?" [laughs] I felt like maybe I would be alienating people who liked The Marked Men. Then another part of me was thinking, "Well, I don't give a shit. I'm just going to do what I want to do."

Todd: There is some relief just getting it done, too. You like a lot of different music—a much larger parameter than just a very restricted version of what some people consider punk rock. And then being able to funnel that into music that's actually listenable is tough. Sometimes those first steps take a lot of distillation just to get to that point.

Mark: It's hard to describe how that works. There will be times when I'm writing a song—it never turns out like what inspires it, exactly. It's sort of like, "I wonder if I could do a song like that? I wonder if I could pull that off?" A lot of times, it doesn't work at all.

Todd: Something I've picked up on and enjoy from both Mind Spiders and Potential

Jumping back, I personally don't know much about Krautrock. I've listened to Can. I understand Kraftwerk a little bit. I've listened to Karlheinz Stockhausen a couple of times. But, I don't have a working knowledge of that style of music. I'm assuming, from your records, that you do. Mind Spiders has a different feel. The music itself is expansive, isolated, a coolness in the music—not in the presentation of the music. Is that apt?

Mark: Yeah. I hope so. I love a lot of Krautrock. I loved Kraftwerk. I loved bands like Cluster and Harmonia. When people say Krautrock, it's a pretty broad term. There's a lot of Krautrock that I don't like very much—the Berlin stuff and the just super-noisy, hippie-ish kind of Krautrock. The stuff, to me, that's really good is the bands that I mentioned. They all came from the same area. It's even more specific than that, the influence. It's something about what they do that's interesting in the sense that it definitely has a psychedelic element, a noisy element. There's a lot of repetition. But, somehow, they still create songs, whereas a lot of the noisy psychedelic stuff, they're not really songs, to me. There's something about those guys. They actually compose things. It's not just screwing around.

Todd: Or not just for effect.

Mark: Absolutely. "This effect is really awesome. Let me show you how it sounds for twenty minutes." That's sort of a pet peeve of mine when bands do that kind of music. If you're going to do something, to me, there should be intention behind it.

Todd: I've been following Mind Spiders since the 7" and I've enjoyed a couple hundred hours listening to Mind Spiders over the past three years. What I appreciate—I'm a punk rocker; I'm kind of a dumb dude—it's awesome I'm



DAVID FORCIER

hearing a distilled version of a very specific type of music through a fellow punk rocker. The songs end. It's still punk rock, but with a musical openness to it that I appreciate.

Mark: When I'm writing a song, it's all about the drums. The feel of the song. That's what's so great about Krautrock. Klaus Dinger, the drummer from NEU! Nobody plays drums quite as cool as he did. Other people can play that beat, but he was able to put down something that has that really amazing, cool thing to it. A lot of times, that's where I start—from some sort of rhythm or drum line. Even an old drum machine. I'd just turn it on and play along with that. All those types of things have their own sort of feel.

Todd: I was thinking another aspect of *Mind Spiders* is the use of keyboards for atmosphere, but it's always reigned in. As a listener, have a point. End your fucking song. That's my breaking point for psychedelic stuff. Roky Erickson is amazing. I think most of the Grateful Dead is pretty much garbage. "Just finish. Just stop. Fuck off." That's a broad brush.

Mark: Definitely. As far as keyboards and drum machines and all that kind of stuff, there are so many awesome things about them and so many cool sounds that come out of those things, but I feel that so few bands use them right. It bothers me. I think that's why I try to do it.

Todd: Let's loop back to the beginning of the *Mind Spiders*. The name. I actually have

read the short story *The Mind Spider* by Fritz Leiber. What specifically, textually, did the story inspire in you to go to the place where you name your band after it?

Mark: I liked the title before I read the story. I thought it sounded cool. I read the story and I think it's a pretty cool story. There are elements of it that I like, but I actually wrote what I later called a theme song, on the first album, before I named the band. I just decided, "Oh, that'd be a good name for the band." I took things from the story for the lyrics, but very loosely. I kicked around names for a long time. It just seemed fitting. I can't explain why, exactly.

Todd: It thematically fits the music.

Mark: I have to give credit to Alex Cuervo. I recorded the *Hex Dispensers*. I thought that it's so cool that he's just writing songs about monsters and witches and stuff like that. I've been doing personal kinds of songs in *The Marked Men*, at least somewhat expressive in that way for a long time. It's another way to just get away from that and another way to focus on something else and force myself to do something a little bit different.

Todd: Funnily, when I'm thinking of the *Hex Dispensers*—"My love / Is a Bat / Your heart / Is a hemophiliac." It's awesome B-movie stuff, but it's also personal.

Mark: He talks about that, too. He mentioned that to me that he felt like even though he was writing about these things, it still ends up

being somewhat personal. It's just more fun.

Todd: It's liberating. There's something great about scary monsters.

Mark: A lot of that stuff is also an escape for me. Normal, everyday life is good for me, but in my work and things like that, I deal with a lot of stressful things, so I want to escape from things when I play music. So, it's sort of like me going into my own little world that I've created. It's fun for me to be there.

Todd: I'm assuming you're populating that world. You have themes. You have ghosts in the machine that are there for you that are willing to help you out. It's nice to have those constructions that you really enjoy... I was also going to say good on you for not naming your band after Fritz Leiber's autobiography. Do you happen to know what it was?

Mark: No, no I don't.

Todd: It's pretty awesome. It's called *Not So Much Disorder and Not So Early Sex*. It's only a hundred pages long.

Mark: [laughs] I like him. I've read quite a few of his other short stories and books. He's a really quirky writer. He has a sense of humor about things. He's cool. I don't know much about him outside of that. My friend who lived in San Francisco said that Leiber was kind of a well-known drunk, not that that's anything new for a writer.

Todd: Going from that, for someone who's never heard the *Mind Spiders*, could you put the band in a nutshell textually—is there a

song, lyric, or concept that you are going back to?

Mark: I don't know how to answer that exactly. There's definitely moody punk rock with science fiction elements.

Todd: I think there's definitely paranoia, but paranoia with a sense of place and a self-effacing sense of humor about it, too.

Mark: I guess I'm thinking more in terms of sound than themes. The story that's going on—there's the Mind Spider, which is an amorphous, evil thing out there in the world. Not from this world, actually. It's the Mind Spiders against the humans. And humans kinda suck. Basically, in the end, the Mind Spiders are going to win. A Misanthropic point of view, I guess.

Todd: So what's the iconography of the skull with the glasses? It's on all of your releases.

Mark: Oh. I didn't want to just use a spider.

Todd: [laughs]

Mark: I had a mask that I had found at a dollar store for Halloween a long time ago. I actually did that before I had named the band. I didn't want to put my picture up on Facebook or something like that, so I put my glasses on that mask and took a picture of it. It wasn't very well thought out, but afterward, I just liked it a lot. I just kept it and used it. My friend Patrick, who did all of the cover art for Mind Spiders, gave me the idea when he saw that. "That can be your logo that's with everything that you release." I didn't think of it at the time, but later, it's almost sort of a branding.

Todd: This is Patrick, who was once in the Riverboat Gamblers who Mike Wiebe accidentally whipped the microphone in the mouth?

Mark: Yeah. He's doing great. He just got married not too long ago. He's not playing music anymore, but he's doing graphic design work for a living. He's done a lot of album covers for different bands.

Todd: I'd like to explore more about age and being a long-time underground musician. I have a series of questions that leads up to something. You're married?

Mark: Yes.

Todd: Is your wife supportive of you making music?

Mark: Yes.

Todd: Do you have any children or any plans to have children?

Mark: No children. No plans to have any.

Todd: Would you consider the music you create analogous to a child? All the time, energy, and constant tending that non-shitbag parents put into children, you are able to put it into a creative endeavor. Would that be fair?

Mark: I think so, but I think I can put music down whenever I feel like it or it's not feeling right to me. Having a kid, that's your job no matter what.

Todd: Point taken. This is nowhere near an anti-kid thing at all.

Mark: I'm not anti-kid, whoever's reading this.

Todd: There are people who are in their late

thirties, early forties, even before that, where they look at their future financial or creative lives, and think: "Well, if I don't have children, I think I can be able to do these other things and still live a reasonable life, not be a dirtbag to my spouse or my family or not be a burden on other people, and still continue to be able to do these things." Was that a consideration at all or did it just kinda work out that you don't have children?

Mark: It's come up a lot. My wife and I have had pressure from my family—mine more than hers—now and then. Not so much anymore. They've given up at this

We have the freedom to do

WHATEVER THE HELL WE WANT.

point. We've never really wanted kids. It's something I don't really think about that much anymore. My wife and I talk about it sometimes. Almost all of our friends and everyone we know has kids and we feel a little bit left out. In the band, it's come up, especially with The Marked Men, because when Mike's wife started having kids. And by the way, I hate when people say, "We're having a kid."

Todd: She's doing the heavy lifting.

Mark: She's the one having the kid. Considering that, and it was hard on Mike. He loves his kids, loves being with them, doesn't like to be away from them, and things like that. So, it's really important to him. I totally respect that. It made doing the band quite a bit harder. The Marked Men, at the time, we were doing pretty well. Now, we're able to do even better, for some reason. It was a lot of pressure to be able to keep the band up. Before Mike's wife had their first kid, Mike went on tour that whole summer and she was pregnant. That was pretty tough for Mike and her. He plays with me in Mind Spiders and still does Marked Men shows. He's a trooper.

Todd: I just want to underscore, too, "being non-shitbag person." I know people who are awful parents. And I know some who are amazing parents and are still active and engaged in something much larger than their immediate family who have my ultimate respect. I do think of that, personally, I'm able to do a lot of what I do—*Razorcake*, in particular—because I don't have to take care of another being who can't take care of themselves.

Kind of along those lines, just so people get a shape, an understanding of Mark Ryan specifically, what have you spent most of your time doing in the last twelve months that isn't sleep and isn't music-related?

Mark: That would be my job. I work with people with intellectual disabilities. They used to call it mental retardation. But I don't work completely full time doing that. I do sorta have another job, but it's music-related in the sense that Jeff and I built a studio.

Todd: Cool Devices.

Mark: Right, where we have been recording bands. That's definitely a creative endeavor in some regards because this is a space where we can record our band and our music. But it's also another job that I have, but it's still music-related, so it doesn't really fit in with your question. I spend time with my wife and we do things together. We go on trips once in a while, but anytime we go on a trip, usually it's based around music; a show that I've got somewhere. Recently, when The Marked Men played in New York, we stayed a few extra days so we could have a little time. I don't really take vacations. [laughs]

Todd: It can be nice to have that blending of time. People want to see The Marked Men, which is awesome. Go to New York. Do a strategic show and then hang out and see a new place.

Mark: I'd never spent that much time in New York. I've had the opportunity to go to so many places and see so many things because of playing music and being able to tour, so that's been great.

Todd: Cool Devices. I don't know any gizmo stuff at all. What's the heart of your studio? Where did it come from?

Mark: Well, between Jeff and Mike and me, we've always recorded our own music, so all of us, over—with Mike it's been twenty years now that we've known each other and playing music together—we've all collected a lot of recording gear. It's between the three of us that all the gear's been acquired. Over the last six, eight months, a big part of my focus has been on the studio as opposed to writing new material and songs. I've been so obsessed with getting it situated, up running right, and things fixed.

Todd: Going the opposite of fancy, what's the cheapest instrument you've ever used on a recording?

Mark: Well, we've had this for years. It's an old Radio Shack, Realistic Stereo Reverb System. It's just this little bitty box. It says reverb, but it actually is a delay. So it's not even what it says it is. We've used that a lot on vocals. I think a friend of ours left it in the old practice space. They didn't care about us taking it. So, that is something that we didn't even pay for. It's just been sitting around forever. That thing is really cool. That thing, I guess, is even considered vintage. I looked this thing up. They're actually expensive now.

Todd: Funny how that works. Have you ever personally picked up an instrument at a yard sale and had that be part of your creative process?

Mark: Yes. That's exactly what happened with Mind Spiders. It's weird that you say



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I FOUND AN OLD CHORD ORGAN AT A GARAGE SALE FOR FIVE BUCKS.

I took it home and I recorded that little chord progression on "Close the Door."

that. The reason I started using keyboards at all, was because I found an old chord organ at a garage sale for five bucks as I was just driving past this house in my neighborhood. I took it home and I recorded that little chord progression that's on that song, "Close the Door." It's just this little piece of plastic thing. It's kind of almost a kid's toy, but they had little buttons that made chords. You play them together and they make weird minor chords and things like that. And after I did that, I fell in love with it so much. "I need to get more."

Todd: Have you ever recorded on a laptop or a cell phone?

Mark: Not on a laptop or cell phone. No. I've recorded on my computer at home. I do that now to do demos. Mostly, I use tape.

Todd: According to my internet research, someone said, "Mind Spiders, laptop recordings" and that bummed me out, visualizing you in particular doing that. [laughs]

Mark: I've definitely used an eight-track and old instruments that aren't necessarily considered nice—so I guess more lo-fi—but I've never used a cell phone or a laptop.

Todd: I get a visual when I listen to Mind Spiders. Mad scientist. With either a musical instrument or recording, have you ever felt like a mad scientist?

Mark: Yes! We have joked about wearing lab coats at the studio to look like we're more professional, like technicians did in the old studios.

Todd: Wear a tie, get a pipe and a clipboard. Class it up. With the studio, what was the most difficult aspect of putting the studio together? A lot of studios today are made by musicians looking for something particular.

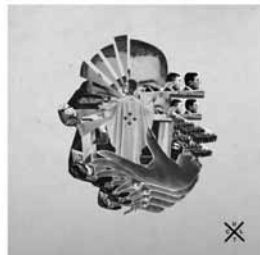
Mark: The hardest thing—we built the studio. Physically, the walls. It's in this really big, old garage that's next to a house. We had to, with the help of my family and my father-in-law. We didn't have a lot of money

to invest. The hardest thing and the thing that we didn't want to compromise on was having the right space.

We've had pretty good equipment to record with for a while, but we've never had a really great space. With the money we could come up with to do it and the debt that we're in for putting it all together—that was the main thing; being able to have a place that we could play late and do things in the middle of the night and nobody would bother us. A place away from everything else. We have the freedom to do whatever the hell we want.

Todd: Would you say that another reason that you're able to make the music that you do is where you are? Dallas, Fort Worth, Denton. I'm assuming there have been opportunities to move, like to Austin or more-accepted music towns. Why stay in Denton and not take off?

Mark: Partly because of very practical reasons. My family is here. Most of my bandmates stay here, too. [laughs] I've had a lot of friends move to Austin, especially from here. That's been a good thing for them. This is just where my people are. I'd love to make money, to make a living making music, in a way. But that's never, ever been my goal. I'm not gonna go somewhere and try to make it or do anything like that. I just want to make



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TODD TAYLOR

**I'M NOT GONNA
GO SOMEWHERE
AND TRY TO
MAKE IT.**

I just want to make
the music I like.
That's always the
end goal for me.

though, so I can't necessarily say that doing music is therapeutic for me.

Todd: That's apt.

Mark: Doing it is a good process and I enjoy it, but, at the same time, I'm not satisfied.

Todd: I don't want to say, "Get satisfied," because a lot of it is that larger process of trying to do things a little bit better. The Marked Men is its own universe. The Mind Spiders is its own universe, but they're connected. They open up both ways to one another. To me, as a music listener, I find that very exciting. You're not releasing the same thing over and over and over. And it's not, "What the fuck, Mark? What are you doing?"

Mark: Well, thanks.

Todd: Thanks for making good music. It's not too common... so are you now called Daddy Spider?

Mark: Oh, no. [laughs] Stephen (Svacina) was just being goofy. He's never called me that, except for that one time in that interview. He decided he was going to call me that.

Todd: This does go into the last question. Mind Spiders started as a solo project. Just looking at the backs of *Inhumanistic* and *Meltdown*, there are six or seven people in the band. A rotating roster of Denton and Austin musicians. Wiccans, Bad Sports, Wax Museums...

Mark: People move and leave, so I want to have something that can just be me by myself. There are songs on those records that are just me and there are songs where it's everybody. There are songs with just one drummer and not the other. It's more about whatever's right for that song. Everybody knows that going in. Everybody, because they have their own projects and other things that they work on, they don't mind me calling the shots about that or making those decisions. Just like me playing bass with Jeff in Radioactivity. I don't have anything to do, really, with the creative process. He tells me what to play. I love it. It's a lot of fun for me.

Todd: Yeah. Sometimes, when you trust somebody wholeheartedly, "Hell yeah, I'll help you out. I get to sit back and watch it happen. This is awesome."



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the music I like. That's always the end goal for me.

Todd: I think that reveals a lot. You aren't opportunistic. You're not trying to be anything you're not.

Mark: I guess that's sort of clichéd. "It's about the music, man." This is where most of my bandmates are and I like playing music with them. But, that said, after going to New York, hanging out there and coming back, I realized how shitty this place is. [laughs] It's pretty awful in a lot of ways, but it's still home to me.

Todd: In a really healthy way, you build your own bubble. You have to look on the upside. Fewer distractions. You can focus on what you want to focus on. Now you have the opportunity to go places and play to people who want to see you. That sounds great.

Mark: That is pretty great. I can't complain.

Todd: People want to see you guys play. That's a success in my book. You downplay it a lot, but you're an incredibly driven person. Where did that come from?

Mark: Partly, I think it probably comes from just being unsatisfied with what I've done already. I guess that's part of why I like the studio because I have this place that I can go. I have space to sit there and obsess about it. I also have a feeling of urgency—not that I feel like I'm going to die tomorrow—but I don't

have a lot of time to accomplish all the things I'd like to do, so I just need to get this done.

I don't know if that comes from my parents. I suppose, though they never put pressure on me. They said, "Do whatever you want." They're pretty supportive. I honestly don't know where that comes from. Since I was a little kid, if I had a book that showed you how to make a mask or draw a monster or something like that, I would do it over and over and try different versions of it. I've always done that kind of thing where I've been driven to do some kind of drawing or art or music or something.

Todd: Part of the discovery is the process of doing it over and over again. You've released three full-lengths in three years. You know how to pull the trigger.

Mark: I'm definitely driven to do this stuff and do it all the time. It's what I like.

Todd: This sounds like another cliché. It's sad, but some people never find what they like. So, would you say that music is a form of therapy? I'm assuming you can't talk about scary monsters at work.

Mark: For my work, I have to keep up appearances. I do try to not think about it and worry about it, which is something I've learned how to do over time, as a counselor, it's what they teach you in school. I'm not sure if it's therapeutic to obsess on things,

The KLITZ

An interview by Ryan Leach



BULLYROOK, Elise Clifton at 2007 reunion

Featuring Photos by Alex Chilton, BullyRook, Steve Lacy, and Kay King. Layout by Daryl.

“The King Is Dead. Long live The Klitz.” –Jim Dickinson, 1979

The Klitz. The name is rather evocative, wouldn't you say? I am writing this on a laptop borrowed from my sister, who shuddered when I told her what I was writing about. And my sis ain't no prude either. The Klitz just does something to people when they hear that name.

This interview with founding member Gail Elise Clifton tells their story better than I ever could. I was around in April 1978 when the band formed with the encouragement and assistance of the late Alex Chilton. Some things are already an obscure matter of public record, like the fact that The Klitz were the first punk band to play live in Memphis, Tennessee in the late twentieth century.

I was in the punk precursor band, The Malverns, with Gail when we recorded a noisy cassette in original Panther Burns synth player Eric Hill's bedroom in October 1977. We never gigged anywhere so The Klitz was Memphis punk ground zero, formed many months before The Panther Burns debuted on February 10, 1979. Founding Klitz member, Lesa Aldridge, believes Chilton formed The Panther Burns to compete with the raw offensiveness of The Klitz. And when it came to rawness, well, The Klitz had that covered.

Memphis in 1978 was a pretty wild place. Alcohol, drugs, sex. You name it, we had it along with the usual recipe for artistic endeavor and the heartbreak that often accompanies said recipe. As Dave Marsh once wrote in *CREEM* in 1972 (and I am paraphrasing here): nobody ever had a good time, not really. The Klitz, in my opinion, should have had a good time and gone on to become the queens of raw, true rock and roll. Sadly, that did not happen. It should have. But I'll let Gail Elise tell the rest.

–Ross Johnson (*Memphis punk scene lynchpin and original Panther Burns drummer, 2014*)

Like Ross Johnson, I consider The Klitz (1978-1980) Memphis' first punk band. They were an all-girl, four-piece group. How many cities can claim their first punk band was all-female? Memphis has always been different, and The Klitz's deranged, rockabilly-tinged thump was far removed from the relative polish of The Ramones. The Klitz's songs were typically mid-tempo (think Sex Pistols), with a musicianship slightly more professional than The Shaggs. The Klitz were simply great in all respects: they really pissed people off and their music was both amateurish and compelling (the hallmarks of great rock'n'roll).

Along the way, The Klitz received help from some key Memphis music scene figures—notably Alex Chilton and the great Jim Dickinson—who saw the potential of the band. Unfortunately, The Klitz's breakthrough moment never happened. Their career highpoint was opening up for The Cramps in New York and recording with Alex Chilton and Sam The Sham (of “Wooly Bully” fame). Like a lot of '70s Memphis acts, The Klitz recorded a lot, but never released anything during their initial two-year run. After guitarist Lesa Aldridge left Memphis for New Jersey in late '80, the band ceased to exist for twenty-five years.

In 2005 Gail Elise Clifton started rehearsing with Lesa Aldridge again, and The Klitz caught their second wind, aided by Stephanie Swindle (bass) and Angela Horton (drums). The Klitz finally released a proper album, *Glad We're Girls*, two years later (available from Goner Records and well worth picking up). After a period of inactivity following a well-received show at the Hi-Tone Cafe in 2007, The Klitz appear ready to play again. It's about time.

–Ryan Leach

The Klitz (1978-early 1980)

Gail Elise Clifton (vocals, keys)
Lesla Aldridge (guitar, vocals)
Amy Gassner (bass)
Marcia Clifton (drums).

The Klitz (early 1980)

Gail Elise Clifton (vocals, keys)
Lesla Aldridge (guitar, vocals)
Sarah Fulcher (bass)
Marcia Clifton (drums).

The Klitz (2007)

Gail Elise Clifton (vocals, guitar)
Lesla Aldridge (guitar, vocals)
Stephanie Swindle (bass)
Angela Horton (drums)

Note: Gail Elise Clifton prefers to go by her middle name nowadays, Elise. In the early days of the Klitz, she went by her first name, Gail. The Klitz's late '70s recordings are still in existence and float around Memphis. They're amazing. These tracks were never properly released and should not be confused with Lesa Aldridge's late '70s EP on Barbarian Records. As of this writing, *Captain Memphis Meets The Klitz*, an incredible 1979 TV documentary on The Klitz and Memphis punk rock, is available on YouTube. The Klitz footage is raw and Jim Dickinson is interviewed at length. Jim Dickinson was a true king.

On one session, we were spiked with acid.



*Jim loved it. He thought it was great!
We were so confused.*



BOTH PHOTOS ALEX CHILTON

Ryan: Were you born in Memphis?

Elise: No. I was born in Pensacola, Florida. My dad was in the navy. He was on the navy's baseball team. My mother and father were both Memphians, though. We moved to Memphis after my dad left the navy when I was one or two years old. My mother gave birth to my sister Marcia in Memphis. Marcia later played drums in The Klitz.

Ryan: Did you have a musical background?

Elise: I did. I started playing piano at the age of eight. I got the sheet music to "Bobby's Girl." Bobby was the name of my favorite uncle, so I learned the song for him. I auditioned for the Beethoven Club of Memphis. That was so intimidating. It gave me my first case of stage fright. I played piano for about three years. My parents bought me all The Beatles records but they liked Elvis. They were fans of pop music. They didn't like country. My interest in country music developed much later.

Ryan: Before punk rock hit, did you play in any bands?

Elise: No. The Malverns was the first band I was in.

Ryan: The Malverns rehearsed and made some home recordings but never played out, correct?

Elise: Yeah. We did get together a lot to practice. We mostly just jammed. It was a stream-of-consciousness thing. The Malverns were sort of experimental. Eric Hill (later of The Panther Burns) was on keyboards and he was into Eno. Ross Johnson (later of The Panther Burns) played drums. We never played a show. In my opinion, the first punk band in Memphis was the Yard Dogs (a group containing Alex Chilton, Chris Thompson, and Ross Johnson or Richard Rosebrough on snare drum, depending on who was available).

Ryan: Ross Johnson adamantly states Memphis' first punk band was The Klitz. Memphis rock writer Andria Lisle has written that it was The Malverns. And you're going with the Yard Dogs.

Elise: Ross is being kind. I think The Klitz are sometimes looked at as the first punk band in Memphis because of my song, "Two Chords." I wrote that when I was in The Malverns and took it with me to The Klitz.

Ryan: It's hard for younger people living in a post-Internet world to realize how crucial those early punk singles were to people forming bands in the late '70s. I heard that Eric Hill had the biggest punk collection in Memphis at the time.

Elise: He may have. Eric and I hung out in East Memphis. That was our crowd. I didn't get to know Alex (Chilton) and Lesa (Aldridge) until later. My former boyfriend Dave Branyan, who played in The Scruffs, was from East Memphis. Peaches Records was in East Memphis. We'd all go there every night. New punk singles were coming out regularly—imports by The Sex Pistols and The Clash. If Eric did have the biggest collection of punk singles, it was because he lived right next to Peaches. I did too.

Ryan: Did the Malverns form and disband in '77?

Elise: Yeah. We were together for three months, max. I moved out of East Memphis to the house I live in now in Midtown while I was still in The Malverns, so I was seeing more of my sister Marcia, Lesa, Alex, and Marcia's boyfriend, Bernard Patrick. That's really how the Klitz formed—I was in Midtown regularly again.

Ryan: You mentioned your song "Two Chords" earlier, which is a really great, archetypal punk song. Were you influenced by the music coming out on New York labels like Sire and Ork?

Elise: I had Sire albums and the Television single (on Ork). I loved The Sex Pistols. I hear The Sex Pistols in The Klitz song "Couldn't Be Bothered" that Alex recorded. I loved Elvis Costello too, especially his word play. He wrote great hooks.

Ryan: How did The Klitz form? What role did Alex Chilton play in the early days of The Klitz?

Elise: Lesa and Marcia had gotten the idea to start a band first. I don't think there was any preconceived notion that The Klitz would be an all-girl band. I told Lesa and Marcia, "I want to be in your band." It sounded like a fun thing to do. Before I joined The Klitz, I had gone over to Lesa's apartment on Madison and showed her my ideas for songs. Alex was there and he put music to my ideas. We recorded what we went over. (Unfortunately, those tapes were lost in 1995.) I'd already set up a musical relationship with Lesa and Alex separately, before the idea of teaming up with Lesa and Marcia came together. The Klitz formed organically.

Ryan: I've heard two different stories about the origin of The Klitz's name: that you selected "Klitz" because it was the German word for "pistol"; the other was that you came up with the name during a night of heavy drinking.

Elise: Both stories are sort of correct. Truthfully, though, we did name the band on one drunken evening. Marcia thought of it. We were drinking at Zinnie's, going over band names for forty-five minutes. Finally Marcia said, "Let's just name ourselves 'The Clits.'" Alex got that grin—"Klits with a 'K.'" And I said, "Yeah. And let's end it with a 'Z.'" That was it: "The Klitz." Later on, I told my Granny Gail the name of our band. She replied, "Oh, yes, Klitz: German for 'pistol.'" She was German. Bless her heart.

Ryan: Early Klitz shows took place at The Midtown Saloon and The Well. Those were the only two venues that would host punk shows in Memphis, right?

Elise: Yes. However, before those shows, we recorded two songs that Marcia and Lesa wrote in my attic: "Macabre Lullaby" and "Delta Strut." Alex played guitar on "Delta Strut." "Macabre Lullaby" was done a cappella. Alex wanted me to sing with Marcia and Lesa. Once we had those songs, The Klitz sort of came to life. When we realized we had a band, we started playing more at Lesa's apartment. She had a great

Fender Twin Reverb amp and a Fender Mustang guitar. That was where we recorded "Cocaine" (with Alex Chilton on lead vocals) and "Swordfish."

Ryan: Talk about the musical background of The Klitz. You stated earlier that you'd played piano as a child. Before The Klitz formed, Lesa had played a major role on what would become Big Star's *Third*. Had Marcia played drums before?

Elise: I don't think Marcia had played drums before The Klitz. Her boyfriend was a drummer. The drums fell into her lap. My mom's boyfriend at the time was a drummer as well. He had a set of drums in a boathouse that was located on the Mississippi River. That's where we moved our practices to. Lesa and I would carry her amp down there. That was before I got my keyboard. We started practicing at the boathouse early on, before we recorded those songs at Sounds of Memphis. Initially, I was just the lead singer of The Klitz. Once we recorded at BR Toad studio, I was singing and playing keys.

Ryan: The Klitz would go on to play a number of shows with The Panther Burns in '79. What was a typical '78 bill for The Klitz like—before The Panther Burns formed?

Elise: The first Klitz live show was at The Ritz in April 1978. It was just me, Marcia, and Lesa. I was still in lead singer mode, no keys yet. Amy (Gassner) hadn't joined the group yet. I want to say Amy joined the band in May or June of that year. We played a few shows as a trio. Our first show was opening up for Tommy Hoehn and I believe John Hampton recorded it. That show could be in the Ardent Records archives for all I know. Over the years, I've heard that it was there. Our second show was at the Midtown Saloon.

Ryan: You had some ground on The Panther Burns. Their first show was in February of '79.

Elise: Yeah, we formed almost a year before them. I remember our first show well. It was Tommy's promotional show for *Losing You to Sleep*. The record had just come out.

Ryan: Unbelievable! What an incredible first show.

Elise: Tommy was so sweet. He let us open for him. That's why I think there might be a live recording at Ardent. It was a special night. The second Klitz show at the Midtown Saloon was memorable. It was noisy when we entered. Alex sort of led us in. Everyone turned, stared at us, and you could hear a pin drop. It was an amazing moment.

Ryan: Having three girls on stage—one being a drummer just learning her instrument—wasn't something you regularly came across in 1978. What sort of reactions did The Klitz get from audiences?

Elise: Audiences generally loved us. Lesa had just switched to electric guitar, too. She had started out playing acoustic guitar at twelve. I don't think she had that (electric) Fender Mustang for too long before I met her. It was great being on stage.

Ryan: The Klitz formed during an interesting period in Memphis music. There was a lot

of debauchery going on. Alex Chilton was deconstructing his music, going from these finely crafted early Big Star records, to tearing his music apart on Big Star's *Third* and his seminal solo debut, *Like Flies on Sherbert*. It makes sense that The Klitz appealed to Alex.

Elise: Right. The Yard Dogs were into deconstructing music as well. Lesa and I would follow them to Court Square in Downtown Memphis and watch them perform. When I saw The Yard Dogs, Richard Rosebrough was the drummer. Ross Johnson played with them sometimes, too. The Yard Dogs influenced me. They were sort of a wild rockabilly act.

Ryan: From what I've gathered, The Yard Dogs performances were sort of happenings—a kind of performance art that people would tag along to and watch.

Elise: Yeah. Lesa would drive everyone to their performances. She had this golden yellow Toyota everyone would pile into. We were in that Toyota the day Alex got up on stage at the Memphis In May Festival and did "The Letter." You might have seen that

Elise: It started at ten AM. Irvin really squeezed us into the studio. He said he got us in solely on the basis of our name. [laughs] Whoever he called at the studio heard the name Klitz and said, "Great name! When can you get them down here?" We rolled out of bed for that session. We had about three hours to record. We did about six songs, including two different takes of "Hook or Crook."

Ryan: What's the story with The Klitz and "Hook or Crook"? Was that an Alex Chilton solo song he adapted for you, or was it written specifically for The Klitz?

Elise: Alex rewrote the words to "Hook or Crook" with us in mind. He picked that song for us to record and perform. Alex would choose cover songs for us. He loved our originals, like "Delta Strut," but he would coach us on songs. On *Like Flies on Sherbert*, Alex's version of "Hook or Crook" doesn't have the lines: "I get by on my looks / I don't think...I only finally think / And that's because I'm a rich bitch." He wrote those lyrics for The Klitz. I could be wrong, but I don't recall hearing those lines on *Like Flies on Sherbert*.

time: The Klitz, The Panther Burns, Mudboy, Teenie Hodges, and Hi Rhythm...

Ryan: That's an amazing lineup.

Elise: That show was a turning point for The Klitz.

Ryan: Jim Dickinson is a really interesting figure. He'd previously played on records with some of Atlantic's biggest stars like Aretha Franklin, and yet he fully embraced punk rock and championed The Klitz. What was working with Dickinson like?

Elise: Jim was affected by punk rock too. In *Captain Memphis Meets The Klitz* he says, "Rock'n'roll is fully two generations old now. And if your mama likes it, it ain't rock'n'roll." I think he really liked The Sex Pistols. He mentions them in *Captain Memphis Meets The Klitz*.

Ryan: Dickinson could've kept working with big artists—sticking solely with better paying work. Yet he chose to work with The Klitz.

Elise: Jim was just true to his heart. It was great working with him. He wanted us to get as high as possible! [laughs] Jim always said, "If you can hang onto the session till

Lesa jumped up on the table with her combat boots and stared at him, eye-to-eye.

footage. It was in the Big Star documentary (*Big Star: Nothing Can Hurt Me*).

Ryan: His performance is incredible.

Elise: It is! Lesa and I were right at the foot of the stage, going crazy. We all drove down to that show together. Alex had on that white shirt. What he's wearing at that performance was his outfit for the whole summer of '78.

Ryan: William Eggleston took a very well-known photograph of Lesa in '73 called *They Needed to Talk*. She used to have wonderful, long hair. By the time The Klitz came around, she cut it short in the spirit of punk.

Elise: That's a lovely photograph. Lesa was the first one to cut her hair. I fell right in afterwards. She used to wear army boots, too.

Ryan: When did Amy Gassner join The Klitz?

Elise: Amy joined in June of '78, only about three weeks before we recorded at Sounds of Memphis (with Domingo "Sam" Zamudio, AKA Sam The Sham).

Ryan: Had she played bass before?

Elise: No, but she was a guitarist.

Ryan: Did Alex set up the Sounds of Memphis recording session with Sam The Sham?

Elise: Alex had Irvin Salky set that up. Salky happened to be Fury Lewis and Phineas Newborn's manager. Good old, Irv. We still live on the same street. I see him every now and then. He would be proud to hear that I'm doing this interview.

Ryan: What do you recall about the Sounds of Memphis session?

Ryan: Jim Dickinson is such a legendary figure in Memphis music. He helped build a mystique around The Klitz with that incredible *Captain Memphis Meets The Klitz* TV special. We spoke earlier and you mentioned Jim taking over for Alex as The Klitz's mentor.

Elise: That's true. But I'd like to talk about something sort of spooky that happened before Jim got involved with The Klitz in 1979. In late December 1978, we had a session at BR Toad. Alex was producing. That's where we cut "Wild Thing," "Land of 1,000 Dances," "As Tears Go By," and "Klitz Anthem"—the latter written by Mary Lindsay Dickinson. Jim knew we were being produced by Alex and said to us, "I have a song called 'Klitz Anthem' my wife has written for you." Jim was not on board producing at this time. I don't recall the exact date of the session; maybe Barry Shankman, who engineered, can remember. But it was the same week Chris Bell (Big Star) died. Looking back on it, Chris's death was shocking. We were so wrapped up in being in The Klitz and working with Alex Chilton, I don't think Chris's death even registered with us. I wish I had said something to Alex about it: "I'm really sorry your friend Chris died." I regret not doing that.

Having said that—1979 rolls along and Jim Dickinson gets us in *Rolling Stone* magazine. We were in there twice. I believe Alex had set Jim up as our producer. Alex had moved on to play with Tav in The Panther Burns. We played a big show around that

three in the morning, something magical will happen. It always does." I believe that's true. On one session, we were spiked with acid. Lesa was playing "Twist and Shout" on guitar and I was singing the lyrics to a Scruffs original called "Teenage Girls" over it. Jim loved it. He thought it was great! We were so confused. Once that happy accident happened, we ended up doing a live medley of the two songs. They use the same chords.

Ryan: The Klitz were filmed at The Orpheum for *Captain Memphis Meets The Klitz*. Is the footage from the TV show the same concert Andy Schwartz caught and reviewed for *The New York Rocker* (September 1979 issue)?

Elise: That footage was shot at The Orpheum. Andy came down to Memphis for that *New York Rocker* piece.

Ryan: Dickinson must have set The Orpheum show up.

Elise: He did. We'd actually played a show at the Orpheum once before. That's where a lot of the *Captain Memphis Meets The Klitz* footage came from. We played the Orpheum's lobby that first night. When we opened up for The Cramps—the show Andy saw and reviewed in the *New York Rocker*—that was the second time we played The Orpheum. On that night we played the main stage. I actually still have an article from *The Commercial Appeal* (August 2, 1979) that reviewed The Orpheum show with The Cramps. They quote Cordell Jackson in it. I'll read you her part: "Three rows up, however, a fifty-six-year-old woman sitting alone seemed to know more about punkabilly than most people in the



BOTH PHOTOS KAY KING



Captain Memphis Meets The Klitz TV show gig, 1979

*There was always something off-kilter about
the recordings we were making in Memphis.*



BULLYHOOK, Lesa Aldridge at 2007 reunion

crowd. She says punkabilly is the highest, purest form of rock music to come along since the '50s. 'I think they're in the groove,' Cordell Jackson said. 'This is what you call 'letting it all hang out.' They've taken free liberties with music.'"

Ryan: That's Cordell talking about The Klitz?

Elise: Right.

Ryan: Andy Schwartz gave The Klitz and The Panther Burns a harsh review in the *New York Rocker*. Of course, there's also that infamous Panther Burns appearance in '79 on Marge Thrasher's TV show where she absolutely loses it. It's surprising that Andy Schwartz, who was very hip—*New York Rocker* was a great magazine—came down harshly on the Memphis punk scene.

Elise: They just didn't get it.

Ryan: And yet here's Cordell Jackson getting it. I think time has proven her correct.

Elise: I think so, too.

Ryan: The *New York Rocker* article corresponded with The Cramps recording *Songs the Lord Taught Us* in Memphis, right?

Elise: It did. The Cramps recorded in Memphis twice. The first time they came through (for *Gravest Hits*) I was still living in East Memphis. The second time they visited, to record *Songs the Lord Taught Us*, was what brought Andy down to Memphis for *The New York Rocker* article. I put Bryan Gregory up and I got a place for Lux one night. I don't know much about those Cramps sessions. They were off working with Alex. I was totally involved with The Klitz, recording with whomever was available, having fun.

Ryan: The Klitz went to New York not long after The Orpheum show. I heard Miles Copeland (or I.R.S. Records) arranged it.

Elise: Right. Apparently, he was in town for The Orpheum show. A lot of people were in town. The same week as The Orpheum show, we played The Well and Ric Ocasek (The Cars. Produced Bad Brains' *Rock for Light*.) was there. Miles was there too and he took us out to breakfast after the show. We went to the Arcade in Downtown. We had our usual beer with scrambled eggs. It was three AM and they were serving breakfast. I'm pretty sure The Cramps were there, too.

Miles was at our booth. Lesa jumped up on the table with her combat boots and stared at him, eye-to-eye. Miles could tell that we were the real thing. The Klitz arrived in New York on August 20, 1979. Miles had us open up for The Cramps at Irving Plaza. I remember there was a matinee and an evening show. Miles bought me and Lesa airplane tickets. Amy and Marcia didn't want to fly. They rode up to New York with Tav and Bernard Patrick. It was great. Miles paid for us to stay at the Iroquois Hotel which is where James Dean stayed at. I loved every moment of being in New York.

Ryan: That trip to New York must have been a highpoint for The Klitz.

Elise: It was. The Scruffs were there, too. They were staying in New York and put me and Lesa up for three more weeks because we wanted to hang out. We ended up getting

another show at CBGBs. Zeph Paulson from The Scruffs played drums for us. That was the show Jon Tiven always talks about. He was there. We stuck around New York and got a little buzz going.

Ryan: Did I.R.S. or Barbarian Records ever mention releasing anything by The Klitz? I know Barbarian did go on to release a limited-run Lesa Aldridge 7" EP soon after The Klitz broke up.

Elise: The Lesa Aldridge EP was recorded before The Klitz formed. Lesa actually recorded that material around the time of *Sister Lovers* (AKA, Big Star's *Third*). I didn't meet Jim Blake (head of Barbarian Records) until '79. I was in the East Memphis crowd in '76 and '77. I hung out with The Scruffs and Tommy Hoehn—the East Memphis power pop people. The Midtown scene, with all of its accompanying debauchery, was something I embraced when I moved to Midtown and joined The Klitz.

Ryan: It seemed that people recorded tons of material, usually under a controlled substance, in Memphis in the late '70s, with no real intention of getting it released.

Elise: People would record *anything* at that time in Memphis. And the odds of that material coming out were next to zero. I have to thank Marcia for recording "Delta Strut," "Macabre Lullaby," and "Cocaine"—those songs we recorded with Alex up in the attic. She realized how cool it was at the time. I was just caught up in the moment, but she knew something special was happening.

Ryan: You spent time in New York in the late '70s, when the original punk scene was still really vibrant. What were some of the differences you noticed between New York's punk scene and the vibrant, yet underrated, scene in Memphis?

Elise: To me, there was a lot of perfection in those Ramones records. There was always something off-kilter about the recordings we were making in Memphis. I'm not sure if it had to do with a lack of practicing or just a general indifference to perfection that the Memphis bands had. We'd just roll the tape and see what happened. Like you said, we weren't thinking these recordings would ever be released.

An album that meant a lot to the Memphis punk scene was Johnny Burnette And The Rock'n'Roll Trio's self-titled album. Alex, Tav, and I loved that record. We thought Johnny Burnette And The Rock'n'Roll Trio were the original punks. When we started The Klitz, we used to all listen to that record over and over and over again. When you listen to the live tracks at The Well, our punkabilly roots come out. The Rock'n'Roll Trio couldn't get signed in Memphis. Sam Phillips turned them down and they had to go to New York to get a record deal. One of Tav's greatest songs is his cover of "Train Kept A-Rollin.'" Paul Burilson (of the Rock'n'Roll Trio) was still hanging around Memphis in the '70s and '80s. My ex-husband RJ had him over a few times and they'd mess around with amps. I didn't know it was *the* Paul Burilson until RJ told me later. I was so mad!

Here I was, doing housewife stuff, and you had Paul Burilson at my house and he didn't tell me.

Ryan: Did The Klitz ever play with Charlie Feathers?

Elise: I don't think so. I did go to a lot of shows The Panther Burns did play with Charlie, though.

Ryan: What happened when you got back from New York?

Elise: When we came back from New York, Lesa and Amy had a falling out. I wasn't there the night it happened. Some say Amy quit, others say she was fired. We ended up getting a show in New York after Amy left. Lorne Michaels, the producer of *Saturday Night Live*, threw a party in New York. He flew us up to play his party. We went right back to New York.

Ryan: *SNL* had a history with punk rock. John Belushi loved Fear and Black Flag.

Elise: Yeah. It was a party for a movie that Lorne produced called *Mondo Video*. We played a party after the premiere of the film at a strip club called the Tango Palace. They say Andy Warhol was there. I even heard John Lennon was there. Marcia, being the smart business-like member of the band, actually went to the premiere of *Mondo Video*. She sat next to Jill Clayburgh at the premiere. Jill was a big actress at the time.

So what did Lesa and I do while the premiere was going on? We sat at the hotel bar and slammed about six glasses of Stolichnaya vodka each, on the rocks. What were we thinking? We made it to seven songs before they pulled the plug on us. I remember tripping and falling over guitar cables. Thinking back on it, who fires their bass player before a show like that? I can't believe we did that to Amy before this big show. The *Mondo Video* party happened at the end of '79. After that, we had another article in *Rolling Stone* magazine. They did a show review and said we were the low point of the evening, clearing the room of a quarter of the audience.

Ryan: What did The Klitz do in '80?

Elise: We played a lot of shows at The Well. We did do a couple of shows with a lady named Sarah Fulcher, who toured with The Grateful Dead as a singer before she joined us. Sarah was working at the local health food store Marcia worked at. That's how Sarah joined up. We played a show with Jim (Dickinson), who was going under the name "Captain Memphis," at Poets with Sarah on bass. We have a tape of it still, although only four songs have survived. We played a few more shows with just the three of us: me, Lesa, and Marcia. We played The Downtowner—a great hotel. I think that was our last show. Either there or The Well. And then Lesa left for New Jersey. And that was it for The Klitz. Lesa left in late '80.

Ryan: What did you do after The Klitz?

Elise: After The Klitz, I had a band called Gail And The Joy Boys. Alex played bass! He did two shows with me. I loved it. Jim Duckworth was in the band, too. We had started writing songs together. Jim had

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just finished reading *Lolita*. There's a character called Mr. Joy Boy in the book and Jim wanted to name the band after him. Tommy Hull was on drums.

Ryan: Jim Duckworth is such a great guitarist. What a lineup.

Elise: Right. Duckworth and I wrote a lot of songs. On the Elise And The Tourist record I released later on, we did a version of "No Fun for Me." That was a Joy Boys song originally.

Ryan: Gail And The Joy Boys was a short-lived group.

Elise: Yeah. After Duckworth left to join the Panther Burns, we broke up. I really like the songs I wrote from that period, with Duckworth and Tommy Hull. They're still in my repertoire to this day. That was a great period for me. I also wrote a song called "Cherry Boys" with Jim Dickinson. Jim was kind of brokenhearted at that point. Lesa had left. Alex was gone with The Panther Burns. He came over to my house and we wrote that song. I sat on it for years until Greg Roberson recorded The Klitz album (*Glad We're Girls*) that came out in 2007. It was great because Jim got to hear that song before he died. It took almost twenty-five years to finally get it recorded.

After the Joy Boys broke up, I had a band called Gail Chanel And The Cosmetics. We played the Antennae Club and lasted about a year. After that, I decided to get a job. During that time I was still writing songs. I had one last band in '86 called Reet, Petite, And Gone. We were named after an old jazz poster from Harlem that I liked. I got married in '87 and that was it for playing live for a long time.

Ryan: You reformed The Klitz with Lesa and released *Glad We're Girls* in 2007.

Elise: I did. I also recorded with Roland Janes in '94. So I did dabble back in music between '92 and '94. My ex-husband was producing Cold Blue Steel—a Texas roadhouse, boogie-type band. Jim Blake came to hear Cold Blue Steel one night at Huey's in Memphis and said to me, "Gail, that's your band. I want to release a single with you being backed by that band." So RJ bought us the 24-track tape and we went down to Texas to record with Cold Blue Steel. Jim Blake tends to appear and disappear. The single never came out and I finally released the track later on.

I got into art around that time. I went to art school. The Klitz did reform in 2005. The big reunion show wasn't until 2007. I started going to Nashville to visit with Lesa in '05. Those first few reunion shows—we got a lot of help from Tommy Hoehn. He had real amps; we just had practice amps. He did our sound at the Hi-Tone reunion show in '07. It's so sad Tommy passed on.

Ryan: The Elise And The Tourist tracks, you recorded with Ross Johnson on drums and Roland Janes producing, correct?



STEVE LACY

So what did Lesa and I do while the premiere was going on?

We slammed about six glasses of Stolichnaya vodka each.

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ALEX CHILTON

The Klitz were the first punk band to play live in Memphis, Tennessee in the late twentieth century.

Elise: Yes. We did those in 2011. The '94 tracks were released under my name "Elise." When I went in to record with Roland in 2011, he didn't remember the session we recorded in '94. Thankfully, I still had a copy and got to play it for him before he passed.

Ryan: Recording with Roland Janes is heavy duty. He was a Memphis institution. What was that experience like?

Elise: He was heavy duty. He was Jerry Lee's original guitar player. He was so sweet. He called me about a month after the session and told me he liked the

song "Heart of a Vagabond." He didn't have to do that. Roland made you feel really comfortable and relaxed when you recorded. I loved working with him. I was so blessed to record with him, Ross, and the rest of the guys in the Tourists.

Ryan: What are you up to now, Elise?

Elise: I want to release a single of some of the tracks I recorded with Adam Hill and Greg Roberson. I'm living the life of a full-time artist and musician right now. I practice my set every day. I want to play more shows. I've been playing acoustically a lot, commuting back and

forth to New York pretty regularly. No one was really available to play. Lesa had moved to Mississippi and Ross is always in a ton of bands. So I started doing acoustic shows. I lucked out on a sweet deal on a '92 American Stratocaster last year and have gone back to electric. I play so much better on an electric.

Ryan: Electrics are much more forgiving.

Elise: They are. They also look better and sound cooler. I like my playing more on it. So I'm going back to electric and looking for a band at the moment.

TOP FIVES

RAZORCAKE



Adam Bowers

- Cayetana, *Hot Dad Calendar*
- Dikembe, *Broad Shoulders*
- Iron Chic, *The Constant One*
- Beck, *Morning Phase*
- Tancred, Self-titled

Alanna Why

Top 5 New Swears Videos

1. "Paradise"
2. "Midnight Lovers"
3. "See You in Hull"
4. "Rather Be Dead"
5. "Two Darts"

Alex Barrett

1. Caves, *Betterment*
2. A stack of Michael DeForge comics from SHQ in L.A.
3. *Dead Man's Shoes*, directed by Shane Meadows
4. Protomartyr, *No Passion All Technique*
5. The current lineup for Fest 13

Art Ettinger

- The Spits, *Kill the Kool 2* x LP
- Alan King, *King Sings Croce* CDEP
- OFF!, *Wasted Years* LP
- Various Artists, *Oi! Ain't Dead 2* 10"
- Bl'ast!, *The Expression of Power 3* x LP

Ashley Ravelo

Top 5 Independent Bookstores in the Los Angeles Area (Alphabetically)

- Booksoup, West Hollywood
- The Last Bookstore, Downtown Los Angeles
- Once Upon A Time Bookstore, Montrose (Children's bookstore)
- Skylight Books, Los Feliz
- Vroman's Bookstore, Pasadena

Ben Snakepit

Top 5 Michigan Beers

1. Bell's Hopslam
2. Motor City Honey Porter
3. Dragonmead Under the Kilt
4. Jolly Pumpkin Bam Noire
5. Arcadia Loch Down

Bianca Barragan

Top Five Aural Experiences of the Last Thirty Days

1. Maxie Dean / Teddy Pushpin / Spooks at Ham & Eggs, 3/28/14

2. Lilacs, an L.A. band whose awesome shows I keep missing
3. The discovery of Slovenly Recordings, whose catalog includes my new faves Sultan Bathery, Bazooka, Gay Anniversary, and Thee Oops
4. Watching *Purple Rain* on a rainy night at home (I guess this was more of a spiritual experience....)
5. White Murder's 7"s for "Harold's Place," "Safety in Numbers," and "Arteries Are Flexible"

Bill Pinkel

- Dead Dog, *Precious Child*
- Criminal Code, *No Device*
- Sam Cooke, *Best of Sam Cooke*
- The Spits, *Kill the Kool*
- Sonic Avenues, *Mistakes*

Billy Kostka

1. Chrome, *Alien Soundtracks*
2. Cloud Nothings, *Here and Nowhere Else*
3. Average Times, Self-titled
4. Black Time, *Blackout*
5. Sonic Avenues, *Mistakes*

Candice Tobin

1. Neighborhood Brats, *Total Dementia 7"*
2. White Murder, Self-titled
3. Brick Mower, *Teenage Graceland*
4. Bad Sports, *Bras*
5. Sonic Avenues, *Mistakes*

Cassie J. Sneider

Top 5 Karaoke Songs That Make Me Want to Ram Knitting Needles in My Ears

1. "Mother" by Danzig
2. "Don't Stop Believin'" by Journey
3. "Wanted Dead or Alive" by Bon Jovi
4. "Summer Nights" by Olivia Newton-John and John Travolta
5. "Paradise by the Dashboard Light" by Meatloaf

Chad Williams

1. Propagandhi at The Metro, 2/21/14
2. Motörhead at The Warfield, 4/18/14
3. The Toy Dolls and Swingin' Utters at The Regency, 4/14/14

4. Culture Abuse at Hemlock Tavern, 3/1/14
5. Bl'ast! at The Chapel, 2/18/14

Chris Mason

1. Sonic Avenues, *Mistakes* LP
2. Vanna Inget, *Ingen Botten* LP
3. Criminal Code, *No Device* LP
4. Protex, *Strange Obsessions* LP
5. Failures' Union, *Tethering* LP

Chris Pepus

- Bertolt Brecht, *Mr. Puntilla and his Man Matti* (2004 BBC Radio 3 adaptation)
- *La Grande Bellezza* (film)
- *The Pervert's Guide to Ideology* (film)
- *Viva la Libertà* (film)
- *Is the Man Who Is Tall Happy?* (film)

Chris Terry

- Brain F≠, *Empty Set* LP
- The Circle Curse, *Glass City* CD
- Pitfall 7"
- Kevin Gates mixtapes (so much pain in that voice)
- Doing book talks at Berkeley High School

Craven Rock

1. Improv Dojo at Jet City Improv (class)
2. Sneaking into Authors, Writers and Publishers Conference (hearing Chris Terry read from *Zero Fade* and seeing y'all 'cake folks there, too)
3. Bubba Sparxxx, *Pain Management*
4. *The Dead Authors Podcast: Chapter 28: Walt Whitman*, featuring James Adonian
5. *American Dust Revisited* by Brian S. Ellis (book)

Daryl Gussin

- The Vexx, "Strength," tie with the La Misma 7"
- Dead Moon, *Crack in the System* LP
- The North Trolls, *Sup* LP
- Leatherface
- Tijuana, Tucson, Austin, Denton, Las Cruces, Tempe: thank you.

Dave Williams

1. Martha, *Courting Strong* LP
2. Ringworm, *Hammer of the Witch* LP
3. Needles/Pins, *Shamebirds* LP
4. Glazed Baby, *Karmic Debt* LP
5. The Pains Of Being Pure At Heart, *Days of Abandon* LP

Designated Dale

1. The Cult, *Peace* LP—the way *Electric* was supposed to sound.
2. Don Rickles, *Hello Dummy!* LP—crowning jewel of doing the funny.
3. 647(F), *Cop Corpse* EP—still a great chunk of vinyl hidden in L.A.'s past.
4. The Getdowns, *Getting Wild* EP—La Whittier's own. Fuck, yeah.
5. Pegboy, *Strong Reaction* LP—like I've told people for years: Get out of my face if you don't own this rekkid.

Eric Baskauskas

- Audacity, live at Bric-A-Brac Records in Chicago, 4/11/14
- Brain F≠, *Empty Set*
- Stoic Violence, *Chained*
- Direct Effect, *Sunburn*
- Floor, *Oblation*

Evan Wolff

Top 5 Columbus Bands Right Now

1. Sega Genocide
2. Day Creeper
3. Total Request Dead
4. Splashin' Safari
5. Connections

Genesis Bautista

Things I Am Still Excited About

- Tercer Mundo, Self-titled EP
- Destruye y Huye
- Blazing Eye
- *Porchcore* (zine)
- NYC Latino Punk Fest 2014

Indiana Laub

- Kid Dynamite, "Pacifier"
- Lilith, "Fuck Yr Brotherhood"
- Max Levine Ensemble, "Elephant in the Room"
- Songs For Moms, "And Don't Tell Me I'm Wrong"
- Kid Dynamite, "Shiner"

Jamie Rotante

Top 5 Vinyl Currently on Heavy Rotation

1. Nervosas, Self-titled
2. Off, *Wasted Years*
3. White Lung, *Sorry*
4. The Mean Jeans / Underground Railroad To Candyland, *Split 7"*
5. Johnny X & The Conspiracy, Self-titled

Jennifer Federico

Top 5 Coolest Punk Names

1. Poly Styrene (X-Ray Specs)
2. Lux Interior (The Cramps)
3. Lorna Doom (The Germs)

**crowning
jewel of doing the funny**

4. Sid Vicious (Sex Pistols)
5. All the Ramones

Jimmy Alvarado

- Chrome, *Half Machine from the Sun: The Lost Chrome Tracks from '79-'80* CD
- Abecedarians, *Eureka* reissue CD
- Inferno, *Pioneering Work 2 x CD*
- Various Artists, *Eccentric Soul: A Red Black & Green Production CD*
- Mormons, *We're Not Dead 7"*

Joe Dana

1. Finally seeing the Toy Dolls after missing them in the late '90s at the Fonda. One of the best shows I've ever been to.
2. Motörhead at the Nokia
3. Chromeo at the Fonda
4. Iron Chic at the Redwood
5. Tommy Vandervort visiting Razorcake <3s drinking beer and listening to records at Bar 107.

John Mule

1. India recognizing a third gender
2. Being thirty-two years old and still having a spring break
3. Badlands' *So Little* on CD!
4. "Osama Bin Laden as the Crucified Christ" by AM!
5. Ruleta Rusa, *Aqui No Es*

Juan Espinosa

- Criminal Code, *Generacion Suicida*, and Poliskitzo live at the Dog Haus in South Central LA, and *No Device* LP
- Oblivionation, *Cult of Culture* EP
- S.H.I.T., *Collective Unconsciousness* EP
- SFN / In Disgust, *Split 7"*
- La Misma live at E 7th St.

Kayla Greet

1. Iron Chic, Canadian Rifle, The Loss at Kraken
2. Jefferson Deathstar, Junkyard Amy Lee, Lonny Bristle, Liz Franks, Kids On Fire at The Morgue parking lot (DIY venue's shut down anniversary show)
3. Against Me!, Cheap Girls, Laura Stevenson at The Neptune
4. Mudhoney playing for free at Full Tilt Ice Cream
5. Pixies at The Paramount Theater (Complete with a Jesus And Mary Chain cover!)

Keith Rosson

- John Brown Battery, *The Only Normal People Are the Ones You Haven't Met Yet* CD (brilliant Chicago emo / pop punk from 2001, ala HWM or Box The Compass)
- *Next*, by James Hynes (novel)
- *Model Home*, by Eric Puchner (novel)
- Title Wave (Portland Public Library's retail bookstore, new release hardcover novels for a dollar fifty=regular coronary thrombosis, yo)
- Duotrope (online database/submission tracker for authors)

Kevin Dunn

1. Ben Snakepit / Mitch Clem, *Snake Pit / My Stupid Life* split zine
2. Liz Prince, *Alone Forever* comixbook
3. Teenage Exorcists, Self-titled EP
4. MUHAMMADALI, *Future Songs* LP
5. Radioactivity, Self-titled LP

Kurt Morris

1. Müscle Wörship, Self-titled
2. Proudentall, *What's Happening Here*
3. Owls, *Two*
4. The Germs, (*MIA*): *The Complete Anthology*
5. My old Razorcake podcasts

Mark Twistworthy

- Protomartyr, *Under Color of Official Right* LP
- Floor, *Oblation* LP
- Allvaret, live
- Breadwinner, *Burner 12"* re-issue
- Baseball season!

Marty Ploy

- Stuffs I Been Listening to a Lot, Some of It Ain't Out Yet So I Been Streaming Like a Chump*
- Torsö, *Community Psychosis* EP
 - Praise, *Lights Went Out* LP
 - Beach Slang, *Who Would Ever Want Anything So Broken?* EP
 - 1981, "Solutions" b/w "Dancing" EP
 - Sickoids, *No Home* EP

Matt Average

- Can, *The Lost Tapes 3 x CD* set
- The Graham Bond Organization, *Wade in the Water 4 x CD* set
- Dropdead / Systematic Death, *Split* EP
- Misery, *From Seeds That We Have Sown* LP
- *Beware of Mr. Baker* (movie)

Matt Werts

- Syl Johnson, *Complete Mythology*
- Kim Deal / Morgan Nagler, "The Root" b/w "Range on Castle" 45
- Ty Segall, *Singles Collection*
- Yoko Ono, *Approximately Infinite Universe*
- Regal Degal, *Format Worth*

Mike Frame

1. Off!, *Wasted Years* CD
2. Drive By Truckers, *English Oceans* CD
3. Orchid, *Zodiac Sessions* CD
4. Durban Poison, all recent 7" singles
5. Nervosa, *Victim of Yourself* CD

Naked Rob

- Terrible Tuesday Radio Show | SF**
- Elegy, *2014 Demo* cassette (SF punk rock)
 - Wolf Party comp (New Zealand underground rock'n'roll/garage/punk bands)
 - Catholic Girls, *Distant 7"* (Denver crustcore)

- Ritual Control, *No Affinity 7"* (SF/Oakland hardcore)
- Offenders 2 x LP reissues (Austin, TX '80s hardcore)

Nighthawk

- The Sheckies at Lemmons in St. Louis, March 21
- Nervosas at Melt in St. Louis, March 26
- Peelander-Z at The Demo in St. Louis, March 28
- Getting a new car
- Having cable TV again

Paul Silver

1. Bad Cop/Bad Cop, *Boss Lady*
2. Street Eaters, *Blood/Muscles/Bones*
3. Pelotan, *Lucky Old Sun*
4. Unwelcomed Guests, *Wavering*
5. Divided Heaven, *Youngblood*

Replay Dave

- Top 5 Albums for Day Drinking + Child Minding*
- House Of Lightning, *Lightworker*
 - Steve Forbert, *Jackrabbit Slim*
 - Radioactivity, Self-titled
 - Nirvana, *Unplugged*
 - Creepoid, Self-titled

Rev. Nørð

- Giuda, *Let's Do It Again* LP
- Bad Sports, *Bras* LP
- The Sands, *Hotel & Casino* LP
- SOA, *First Demo 12/29/80 7"* EP
- Coloured Balls, *Ball Power* LP

Rich Cocksedge

- Stiff Little Fingers, live in Exeter, U.K. and *No Way Back* LP
- We Live In Trenches, *Live Crisis* LP
- Wisecrack, *Whiskey, No Mixer*
- Unwelcome Guests, *Wavering* LP
- Seeing Newport County win at Torquay United. CTID!

Ryan Nichols

- Del Taco
- The Indoors, Self-titled LP
- Spitting Image, *Love on a Terror 7"*
- Sunsick, Self-titled LP
- *In Cold Blood* by Truman Capote (book)

Russ Van Cleave

1. Drive-By Truckers, *English Oceans*
2. Pretty Boy Thorson And The Fallen Angels, *An Uneasy Peace*
3. The Figgs, *Rejects*
4. Pete Shelley, *Homosapien*
5. Roky Erickson And The Aliens, *The Evil One*

Sean Arenas

- Feral Future, *Haematic* LP
- The Taxpayers, *Cold Hearted Town* LP
- Spokenest, *Destroy, Gone, Listen, Lose* Cassette
- Libyans, *Expired Language* LP
- Lindseys, *Religious Sexs* LP

Sean Koeppenick

Top 5 "Scene" Books

1. *Dance of Days: Two Decades of Punk in the Nation's Capital* by Mark Andersen and Mark Jenkins
2. *We Got the Neutron Bomb: The Untold Story of L.A. Punk* by Mark Spitz and Brendan Mullen
3. *Why Be Something That You're Not* by Tony Rettman
4. *All Your Ears Can Hear: Underground Music in Victoria, BC 1978-1984* by Jason Flower, Ricky Long, and Kev Smith
5. *Please Kill Me: The Uncensored Oral History of Punk* by Legs McNeil and Gillian McCain

Tim Brooks

- Strange Attractor LP
- The Flex, *Wild Stabs in the Dark*
- Scapegoat EP
- Peacebreakers, *Everyday Battle* EP
- Fatigue, *Demo*

Toby Tober

Top 5 Movies I Have Enjoyed Recently

1. *Golan the Insatiable* (series)
2. *Nebraska*
3. *Rick and Morty* (series)
4. *The Spectacular Now*
5. *Your Pretty Face Is Going to Hell* (series)

Todd Taylor

Top 5 Books/Zines/Zine Collections I've Enjoyed Recently

- *Wish You Were Me and Sweatsuits of the Damned* by Myriam Gurba
- *Fan Interference, A Collection of Baseball Rants and Reflections* by Mike Faloon and Steve Reynolds
- *Giving the Finger: Risking It All to Fish the World's Deadliest Sea* by Jim Ruland and Scott Campbell Jr.
- *Nights and Days in a Dark Carnival: Time Spent with Juggalos* by Craven Rock
- *Lilac Mines* by Cheryl Klein

Tommy Vandervort

1. OWTH, The Slow Death, The Gateway District at Triple Rock, MPLS
2. The Slow Death, *No Heaven* LP
3. OWTH, The Brokedowns, Meatwave, I Am Heresy at Subterranean, Chicago
4. Erika Nelson, tour manager extraordinaire
5. Iron Reagan, *Worse Than Dead* LP

Ty Stranglehold

1. Neighborhood Brats, *Total Dementia*
2. Off!, *Wasted Years*
3. Canadian Rifle, *Deep Ends*
4. The Steve Adamyk Band, *High Above*
5. Espectrostatic, Self-titled



45 ADAPTERS:

Dress Well, Drink Heavily: 7"

Imagine Danko Jones meets oi. This is a nifty little record from this Brooklyn outfit who, on their web page, describe their music as "a truck full of Cock Sparrer records crashing into a truck full of Otis Redding records." That about nails it. The 45 Adapters are sparse and tight, like a lithe and wiry boxer who can always beat down his bloated nemeses. Good stuff. White vinyl! —The Lord Kveldulfr (Longshot / Contra)

666 ANIOLOW: *Czarcilok: LP*

This is a full album of seventeen studio recorded covers of well-known songs by the Misfits. For some reason, Horror Hotel is listed in English but all the rest of the songs are given a Polish song title. Seventeen versions of Misfits songs with vocals and lyrics in Polish. There really is not anything else to say about this record. —Mike Frame (Pasazer)

ALL DOGS: *Self-titled: 7"*

Punks from Columbus keep putting out the good stuff. All Dogs, a three-piece group hailing from thereabouts, will be counting this 7" as their second release following a split cassette with Slouch last summer. Here, four roaming and low-distortion tracks talk friendship and punk love calamity in the Midwest. The band is tight, restrained, and thoughtful, but it's singer Maryin Jones' melodic voice that steals the ears, floats above the rollicking steadiness of her bandmates, and makes with the considerate and nuanced and heartfelt shit that's needed after a winter of bloodthirsty potholes and piles of angry, grey snow. For me, All Dogs are going to be the band to see the week after I lose my gloves for good and slice my jeans into shorts. Check out "Buddy" from this 7" and "Annoying" from their split, which rocks only slightly harder than the new stuff. Available on creamy mint vinyl, delicious! —Jim Joyce (Salinas, Salinas.com)

AMBULARS, THE:

Dreamers Asleep at the Wheel: LP

This record took me back to the days when The Anniversary were still putting out records, only these guys don't use keyboards on every song. The Ambulars have the whole power pop trio sound down. All the songs are well crafted, and, as a whole, the record flows together nicely. There are a lot of male/female vocals harmonies which add a nice dynamic to the songs. A lot of the themes of the songs seem to deal with growing up, feeling disconnected, and heartbreak. Recommended for fans of true emo, indie rock, and pop punk. —Ryan Nichols (Salinas, salinasrecords@gmail.com)

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RAZORCAKE 78

RECORD REVIEWS



"Great for summertime listening after you've dumped your boyfriend for not being awesome enough."

—Kayla Greet

LIPSTICK HOMICIDE: *Out Utero LP*

AMPUTEES, THE: *Scream: 7" EP*

The opener, "Beaner," is a seriously nice bit of haunting rock/punk with an almost psych-pop undertow and nice drony duo vocals. The closer, "88," is a catchy poppy punk driver of a tune. Sandwiched in between are two artier bits of oddball punk and a thrasher. —Jimmy Alvarado (Money Fire)

ANTI YOU: *Blank Stares: LP*

I'd say this is Anti You's best material yet. Still as fast and thrashy as before, but it's all tighter and more focused than the older stuff. There's more punch in their sound. There are varying tempos in the songs, some quick guitar solos, and "whoa-oh" backing vocals to ensure that this whole record does not turn into one long blur. I like the transition between "Rat Trap" and "Too Young to Die," where all the instruments, except the drum and bass, go away for a few seconds. Helps give this a live feel and keeps the urgency constant. What's really cool about this is how catchy these songs are. They're barreling down the whole time, and there are these choruses and beats that direct your attention away from the chaos. Check out songs like "Notions," "Pull Through," and "Final Scene." They all have that manic energy and a way of working themselves into your consciousness. The kind of hardcore

that will appeal to those who like their music fast, and to those who want to sing along. —M.Avrq (Six Weeks)

ANTITHOUGHT:

Life's Too Long: Cassette

Let's talk about "fuck" for a sec. A quick preliminary scan of the lyric sheet revealed close to forty of 'em in five songs (which turned out to be seven minutes long). I'm all for free expression, but I also believe in the law of diminishing marginal returns, which says something loses its impact with repetition. This is all in the way of saying I thought these cats had a tough row to hoe. Well, fuck me! Antithought's gruff punk is perfectly suited for such fucking sentiment, what with their mixture of street punk and fucking Negative Approach: anthemic and pissed. That's what I get for reading a lyric sheet first. —Michael T. Fournier (Acid Kat)

ARROYO DEATHMATCH:

All of Them Witches: CD

I was going to call this "anarcho-flamenco punk," but I don't think what Arroyo Deathmatch plays is technically flamenco. There's a definite Spanish feel to it and there's a lot of flute work and there are moments that made me think of *The Spirit of the Beehive*. But, really, this is just a standard, excruciating folk-punk

record—ostensibly radical/populist/authentic, though in truth it's contrived and ridiculous and completely at odds with what people actually listen to. You get one singer who sounds like Chuck Ragan and another who sounds like John Darnielle, basically a lumberjack and an accountant screaming at you about straight edge and voting over acoustic fast-core with prog time shifts. I groaned and rolled my eyes, even when the band did something sort of cool like make an album without the use of electricity (you wonder how they manufactured the CDs and the answer is naturally occurring forest disc-burners running on syrup and good vibes). Another bohemian punkhouse vanity project, light years away from Wallace Berman or any of the real cool outliers. —Matt Werts (Self-released, arroyodeathmatch.bandcamp.com)

AXEMEN, THE: *Derry Legend: LP*

Derry Legend was originally released by Flying Nun in 1989. Hard to find even in New Zealand, Luxury Products stepped up with a great reissue. The label went with a faithful reproduction of the original *Derry Legend* sleeve and threw in a nice, two-page newsprint insert with photos, reviews of the album from the Flying Nun release (incidentally, mostly scathing), handwritten notes from the period, and show flyers. No corners were cut; this was a costly reissue (more of a reason to pick it up). *Derry Legend* is slightly more focused than The Axemen's vinyl debut *Three Virgins*—and that's likely attributable to Dragan Stojanovic's presence on *Derry Legend* (Dragan's a great guitarist) and access to The Skeptics' sixteen-track studio. Nevertheless, The Axemen still sound like The Axemen. Shambolic punk rock ("Disc to Disk"), rapping ("The Tragic Tale...") and stabs at girl-group harmonizing ("Hey Alice!") are all present on *Derry Legend*. Steve McCabe's catchy "Wharf with No Name," conceivably a New Zealand radio hit, is on *Derry Legend* (check YouTube for the accompanying music video—yeah, that's Celia Mancini miming background vocals). Like The Swell Maps, you either get The Axemen or you don't. They were championed by some (notably The Clean's Hamish Kilgour and Siltbreeze's Tom Lax) and maligned by others (NZ's music press—granted, that's not saying much. Just read their pitiful reviews on the album's insert.). For the uninitiated, *Derry Legend* or *Peter Wang Pud*, are great starting points. *Derry Legend* is my favorite Axemen record and that's saying something: I put out their last full-length album! Highly recommended. —Ryan Leach (Luxury Products, luxuryproductsusa.com)

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BAD COYOTES:

Time for Sex Positions: 7"

A quick and dirty serving of that raunchy, trashy kind of garage rock that's played by dudes who all have nicknames. The band's "retro" leanings come through in the heavily filtered guitar tones (not to mention the garish pink album art) while the vocalist yelps like a young Danzig introduced to psych rock before he had a chance to get into grave robbing and werewolf books. A fuzz-overloaded Wire cover rounds out the three originals. Not really my jam, but I could see a house party I wasn't invited to blowing up to this. —Indiana Laub (Resurrection, getresurrected.com)

BAD PEOPLE: Mean Talkin': 7" EP

Fuck, are these vocals annoying. They yammer and yammer in a whiny way that gets under your skin. The music is okay modern day punk rock. Nothing, outside the shitty vocals, stands out. —M.Avrq (Feral Kid)

BATH PARTY: Self-titled: LP

Baths are disgusting and partying is awesome. Bath Party has more of a salty beach party sound than a dirty bath sound. These guys remind me of some of the Burger Records bands—low-fi, garage rock. Most of the songs on this record start with a basic structure and then they go off into instrumental territory after a few minutes, for a few minutes. Sometimes I wasn't sure if a new song started or the current song went into a new

direction. The vocals sound like they're coming out of a transistor radio while the guitars sound like background music from the original Batman show. There's a very psychedelic '60s lo-fi thing going on here. But rather than record under poor conditions, these boys seemed to have fine tuned their sound to the mark just above lo-fi. Put on your shorty shorts, grab some sunscreen, put out your tongue, and trip balls. —Ryan Nichols (Resurrection, resurrectionrecords666@yahoo.com)

BEAUTIFUL SUNDAYS:

Tangled Thoughts about You: LP

It was love at first sight. I can't say no to the swarm of water-colored cats playfully intertwined on the record cover. I slip out the vinyl and, lo and behold, the B-side is adorned with even *more* playful kitties screen-printed in gold ink! It's a shame that the vinyl belongs in a frame, not on your turntable. The music is clean and the production is crisp, especially the punchy drums, but the vocals are off-putting. They're equals parts New Found Glory's prepubescent squeals and the awful screaming techniques heralded by Epitaph's catalog of "hardcore" embarrassments. Sometimes love is superficial. —Sean Arenas (Crapoulet, cool@crapoulet.fr)

BILLY JOE WINGHEAD:

Spanish Asshole Magnet: CD

Holy crap, what an awesome release! Eleven tracks of twisted, sleazy and greasy punk'n'roll from this longtime

Oklahoma outfit that sounds like a tasty mix of Stooges and Nashville Pussy at times. I totally dug the creative usage of the theremin-y sounds too. —Garrett Barnwell (Saustex, saustex.com)

BIRD SOUNDS: New: 7"

This three-piece band from the Twin Cities offers a three-song vinyl debut that varies between upbeat garage punkers and tremolo-ish, effects-layered rockers. The garagey parts sound like the Black Lips to me. On the B-side, things get weirder and more interesting. This is a pretty good listen; I just wish it were longer. —Mark Twistworthy (Big Action)

BLACK BLACK BLACK: Self-titled: LP

This is a hard rock record for fans of Big Business, Melvins, Dragonforce, and Pentagram. There seems to be a bit of humor mixed in with Black Black Black's mix of heavy rock'n'roll—at least I hope they're joking at times. Some of the song titles, such as, "Pentagram On" and "Soar Like a Spider" should give you some insight as to what I'm talking about. There are a lot of chugga-chugga guitar riffs; most of the songs are very riff-driven. The recording sounds great, the instruments are tight, and the production is clean, "Get your pentagram on." —Ryan Nichols (Aqualamb, aqualamb.org)

BLACK SPARROW PRESS:


Fever Shakes: 7" EP

Outta San Pedro, the follow up to *Half-Ass Romance* takes it down a

notch from drunk in the parking lot rowdiness to cowboy junky blues, bringing up sounds of Drunken Boat and 1-2-3-4 Go! Records. These four new tracks top the scales at eight and a half minutes total, putting their stamp of Fraggie Rock on sun-kissed California hide. The first half of the tracks fail to pull as much weight with a straightforward verse, chorus, verse format we've heard before, lead by whiskey-stripped vocals and gang choruses. "Bedroom Eyes" adds another layer, pulling up to a steady boot-stompin' clip with distinct key changes and tricky guitar work. Pulling up the rear, "Babykiller_05" coasts into the palm treed horizon on lazy Sunday afternoon chords, preferring skateboard to automobile, simple to unnecessary. —Kristen K. (45 RPM, 45rpmrecords.bigcartel.com / Recess, recessrecords.com / Something Dancey, facebook.com/SomethingDancey)

BLOODLET: Embrace: 7"


Daaaang! An unreleased Bloodlet track from the *Shell 7"* sessions. If you're familiar with early Bloodlet, you know exactly what to expect. Heavy, strained, incredibly unique hardcore that hearkens transition-period Neurosis but with a very Victory Records heyday aggressiveness and production. Not unlike their other early 7" tracks, *Embrace* only hints at the brilliance that was to come on the band's first LP and their masterpiece, *Entheogen*, but this is still first rate, essential heavy music. Killer. —Dave Williams (A389)

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BOMB, THE: *Indecision: 2 x LP*

The Bomb are Chicago punk vets, and this is a rerelease of their album from 2005. Sound-wise, they hew close to the Hüsker Dü sound of frontman Jeff Pezzati's legendary band, Naked Raygun. Unfortunately, The Bomb's songs feel slow and overlong, lacking the urgency that makes his older band so compelling. This new edition features awesome cover art by the awesome Nate Powell, and an extra LP with bonus tracks and a radio set. —Chris Terry (No Idea)

BORDER BASTARD: *XVII: CDEP*

A three-piece from Italy that, apparently, has been shredding since 2010. The sound here veers between full-frontal punk that recalls The Damned, while other tracks lean on stoner rock standards. It's still more Motörhead than straight-up sludge in most cases. "Satan's Priest" lives up to its name. Burning flames and taking names! Solid work. —Sean Koepenick (Kornalcio, kornalcio.wordpress.com)

BRAIN F-: *Empty Set: LP*

I love this. It feels like the golden half hour of a party, when all my friends are there and I'm laughing loud but not yet sloppy or sleepy. Brain F- is from Charlotte. They play scrappy four-chord punk with motormouth lyrics delivered by a woman with a matter-of-fact voice. Say it, "Brain Flannel." —Chris Terry (Grave Mistake)

BRATS, THE: *Be a Man: 7"*

HoZac dusts off another oldie and gives it a proper second spin, in this case a 1974 single by a band formed by guitarist Ricky Rivets after leaving the band which soon after became the New York Dolls. His association with that band is in full evidence via the up-tempo title track, which drips with the same swagger and attitude the Dolls utilized with devastating effect, and was also put to good use later by Rip Off Records house band The Infections on their *Kill* album. The flip, "Quaalude Queen," is a bit slower, but still has its tail feathers wagging. Definitely worth picking up. —Jimmy Alvarado (HoZac)

BUCK BILOXI AND THE FUCKS:**Self-titled: LP**

It's hard not to go overboard describing how good this album is. Titles include "Shut the Fuck Up," "Shut the Hell Up," "Hit You with a Brick," and "Who Gives a Fuck." The lyrics could have been compiled from graffiti on a bathroom wall. It's snotty. It's repetitive. It's catchy. It's insulting. It's overdriven. It's short. It doesn't quit. It will sink your ship. —Billups Allen (Red Lounge, redloungerecords.com)

BURNERS: *Feast: 7"*

From the moment the title song blasts off, this record tears through styles and time signatures so fast that I could hardly keep up for the first couple listens. Each song seems to span at least three or four tempos (most of which clock in between "thrashing"

and "blistering"), technically overwhelming in the best way. Here I am thinking I'm in for a mathy take on melodic hardcore, maybe tinged with that yowling brand of nerdy early-2000s emo, when suddenly the group vocals kick in and it's a raspy-voiced pop punk anthem, and then the guitar goes sailing off into a metallic tapping frenzy and it's all over (but not before channeling Kid Dynamite for exactly four seconds, out of nowhere). All this to say that Burners nearly defies comparison, though the chaotic stop-start arrangements remind me of Fig 4.0 more than anything else. This is something special, some of the most technically proficient and interesting DIY punk I've heard in a long time. Apparently this is a three-piece, so the rest of us might as well pack it up and quit music. Just wish this came with a lyric sheet. —Indiana Laub (No Breaks)

BURNT SKULL: *Sewer Birth: LP*

Burnt Skull, an Austin band containing members of Total Abuse, Cruddy, and Best Fwends, perfectly fuse the unadulterated noise rock of bands like the Brainbombs and, dare I say, '80s industrial metal-tinged stuff like Godflesh. Most of the songs are mid-paced and drudge through the ugliest of riffs, all with an underlying—sometimes way underlying—sense of melody which in turn makes this record very listenable and, at most moments, really great. The effects on the vocals give them a sound akin to the blackest of black metal records, but, despite the

heaviness and darkness surrounding it all, those underlying hooks reel me in every time. —Mark Twistworthy (12XU, 12xu.net)

CASTET: *Live in Lewacka Nora: LP*

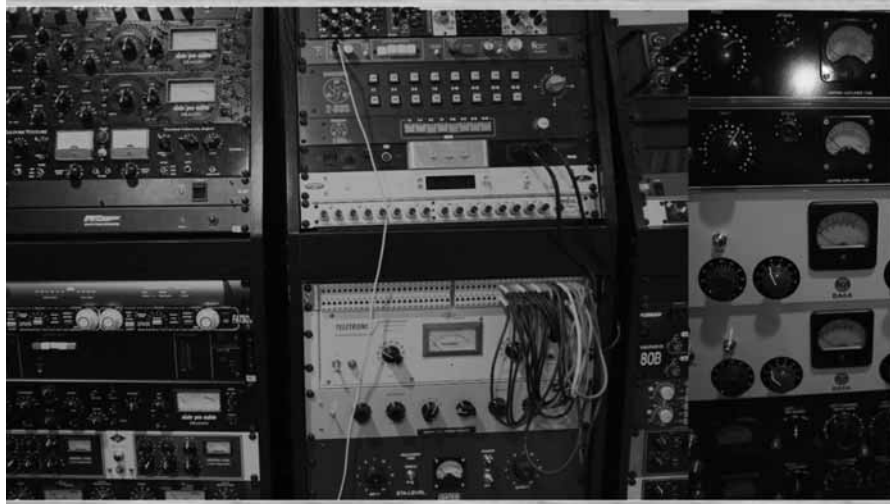
This 12" is a live document by Polish hardcore punks Castet, which was appropriately recorded in the punkest of all places: a squat in their native Poland. Live recordings are typically not my fair—especially as an introduction to an otherwise unfamiliar band—but the soundboard quality has definitely sold on this one. Castet's straight forward hardcore punk attack owes quite a bit to Boston's Out Cold and Sweden's Totalitär, but considering that both acts are considered legendary I'm sure Castet would consider this comparison a compliment. This record happens to play inside out, so don't drop the needle on the outer edge or else you'll miss the non-stop hardcore onslaught and be stuck in locked groove purgatory for all eternity... or until the belt drive on your turntable gives way. —Juan Espinosa (Pasazer, pasazer.pl)

CAVE STATE: Self-titled: 7"

Cave State are powerviolence as fuck, man. You got machinegun drums, loud guitars, plenty of breaks, and song titles like "Prisoner Mentality" and "Self Extinct." The singer sounds like he's fighting somebody when he's singing; either that or he sounds like someone is trying to strangle him with a bed sheet. I don't mean any of that to sound like an insult. I just mean that he sounds

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genuinely pissed. The photographs on this record will not make you feel all warm and fuzzy inside. —Ryan Nichols (To Live A Lie, info@tolivealie.com)

CHAOSCHANNEL: (*Magic Bullet*), *That Works to Feed the Pig!!*: 7"

Two tracks of noisy, unsettling punk from Japan. Slapped on top of distorted guitars and rapid-fire drums, the front man's nasal ranting is monotonous, almost robotic. The lyrics are in English, but something is clearly getting lost in translation. On the other hand, the absurdity of phrases like, "Gonna buy bullshit that are all is bomb," and, "You're slaves of big shit," only adds to the disorienting weirdness of this record. The insert reads like a demented manifesto and folds out into a surreal collage poster. I think this is hardcore punk made by aliens. —Indiana Laub (SPHC, sphc.bigcartel.com)

CHEMICALS / P.R.O.B.L.E.M.S.: *Split*: 7"

What we've got here is a cool new single from two Portland, OR bands that have been around for a while with members from lotsa other good bands. Chemicals are the brainchild of Jonny Cat of The Triggers and Jonny Cat Records. They turn in two tunes of spazzy, snotty garage-y punk, like they've been doing for many years. P.R.O.B.L.E.M.S. have two tunes of very aggressive punk with just a hint of up-tempo late '90s garage punk, much like singer Bradley's combo The Weaklings were kicking out back then. The band also features Kelly from Pierced Arrows on bass. —Mike Frame (Taken By Surprise)

CLEAN GIRLS:

American Mothers: 12" EP

Like dormant spores from early Swans, Clean Girls have nurtured their strain of dark, dank basement noise to pair it with Metz's anachronistic chord structure. Blend at 45 RPM and you have their second EP: four new tracks of noise screamo flailing and lurching from wall of noise to melodic feedback like Frankenstein's monster. Meandering at times, tracks crescendo in unintelligible epithets and dive beneath waves of grungy guitar. Half the tracks come apart like an old sweater in the wash. "The Body You Want" has my vote for most thrash danceability built on the aforementioned feedback whine while tight, automatic gunfire drums in "Old Crow" focus the whole thing into a seething two and a half minutes of fuck you. Recommended. —Kristen K. (Self-released)

C.O.M.A.:

Clinik Organik Muzik Anatomik: LP

Dunno a helluva lot about the group or the album, but this is what the interwebs was able to learn me about both: C.O.M.A. was an early French punk band comprised of members that went on form Charles De Goal and the French contribution to the long list of bands that have used the name Danse Macabre. This is an official reissue of their sole album, originally released in 1979 on Flamingo Records, with the current pressing numbering a thousand. What you're getting here is some seriously good synth-heavy punk with songs alternating between more

aggressive—not unlike the Screamers or Nervous Gender—and more introspective and expansive fare along the lines of what's now being called "cold wave" these days. Fans of either of the aforementioned bands/genres as well as anyone who remembers the weirdo heyday of labels like Subterranean would do well to snatch this up as quickly as ye can. —Jimmy Alvarado (Danger, dangerrecords.bandcamp.com)

CONQUEST FOR DEATH:

Many Nations, One Underground: LP

Thrashcore! Bay Area hardcore veterans on their second album, continuing where What Happens Next? left off and with a similar membership, including the "core" of Devon Morf, Robert Collins, and Craigums aka Hot Lixx Hulahan! Between WHN? and Conquest For Death, this must be one of the most well-traveled DIY hardcore groups in history, regularly embarking on tours to less visited regions of the world, bringing their positive brand of thrash/punk to kids starved for it in Africa, South America, Eastern Europe, Southeast Asia, Western Asia, and even the Middle East. None of that would matter in a record review if the actual music didn't back it up, but it absolutely fucking does. These dudes may be in their forties, but they're writing and recording some of the fiercest and most energetic music of their extensive discographies. All of this is summed up in the heavy and anthemic title track: "Foreign cultures, different tongues,

but we play it loud, and are all one / the biggest cities, the smallest towns, dig and you'll find, the underground." —Chad Williams (Tankcrimes)

CY BARKLEY AND THE WAY OUTSIDERS: *Mutability*: LP

This record was a pleasant surprise this month. The bright, cubist cover made me feel like there was going to be some fun tracks on this record. Right off the bat, this is a party record. The opening track, "Violation," has an angular post-punk feel to it. Think Jay Reatard meets Pylon. The rest of the record doesn't let up and gets really spazzy and nervous sounding. These guys have a sound that I bet sounds even better live. Judging by the photo inside, this is a band you want to drink beers with. So let's recap: You're going to have a party, you're going to play *Mutability*, and everyone is going to dance their ass off. —Ryan Nichols (Southpaw)

DE KIFT: *De Dag*: 7"

De Kift is punk-flavored to be sure, but would probably be more properly described as experimental, or non-standard or, dare I say it, punk-progressive. The tunes on this record were originally recorded in 1988, which makes sense now that I look at the liner notes, because De Kift remind me of the somewhat experimental punk sound that arose in the mid- to late-'80s with bands like Th' Inbred and such in response to the snooze-fest that hardcore was becoming at that time. —The Lord Kveldulfr (Antena Krzyku)

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DECRANE0: Self-titled: LP

This Mallorca-based outfit keeps their punk en Español at a mid-tempo clip, aiming for more thud than velocity. The song lengths rarely break the minute-and-a-half mark, and while the repetitive tempos get a bit numbing after a while, they deliver with sincerity and some effective hooks that come across more successfully when digested in smaller bites. —Jimmy Alvarado (Crapoulet, crapoulet.fr)

DESTRUCTORS, THE: New York New York: CD

This is the long-running U.K. band's love letter to 1970s NYC. With their spot-on, no frills, driving punk'n'roll, they provide a musical tour of the Chelsea Hotel, Warhol's Factory, CBGB's and more. This is easily one of the coolest punk concept albums I've ever heard. It's also an interesting contrast to the music that came out of NYC at that time. There's no attempt to mimic the musical style of the New York Dolls or their ilk, although those old NYC bands are clear influences for The Destructors. Also, this is definitely the music of an outsider looking in, perhaps glamorizing a time and a place that has been much glamorized, as opposed to the more streetwise tales that originally came out of the scene. Some of the tragedy is lost in favor of celebration, but that's the point. This is as much a tribute to all of the music and movies and stories that NYC produced in the '70s and the impact they had on The Destructors as it is a tribute to

the city itself. —MP Johnson (Rowdy Farrago, destructors666.com)

DEZERTER: Decydujące Starcie: LP

Available for the first time on vinyl, this album was the tenth full length from the popular Polish band Dezerter. Full of obnoxious digital effects, distorted vocals, and tributes to industrial music of the 1980s and 1990s, this record is fairly original, but kind of hard to take. Their influence, particularly in Europe, is undeniable, but this era of Dezerter is best saved for their diehard fans. Like being in a teenager's car who is blasting Ministry, I was ready to get out at the first red light. —Art Ettinger (Pasazer)

DEZERTER: Mam kly mam pazury: LP

Dezerter are probably one of the best-known Polish hardcore bands to U.S. audiences because of the debut album that *Maximum Rock'n'roll* released in 1987. That album is long considered to be a classic and very important in the history of Polish underground music. This LP (of which the title translates to "I Have Fangs, I Have Claws") is a re-issue of their eighth album and the first time to ever be pressed on vinyl. Musically, Dezerter's sound embraces the raw and uncompromising metal-tinged hardcore aesthetic, with songs tackling environmental and vegetarian topics, all sung in Polish. —Mark Twistworthy (Pasazer)

DINO'S BOYS: Last Ones: LP

This debut LP from Atlanta's Dino's Boys is seemingly inspired more by

The Spits and The Briefs than the bands that inspired those two popular bands. Dino's Boys couldn't be catchier, with each track exploding with energy and style. The sort of record that spreads like wildfire in the underground, *Last Ones* will probably already be one of the most talked about 2014 releases by the time this issue hits stands in June. Hopefully the songs on *Last Ones* won't be the last ones from this incredible new band. I'm totally hooked! —Art Ettinger (Oops Baby)

DOT DASH: Winter Garden Light: CD

A hard one to nail down; imagine Bob Mould with what's-his-name from the Cure on vocals? This is one of those rock'n'roll records that I keep in rotation as an antidote / change of pace to the frenzy that is my collection otherwise. In general, Dot Dash play a more subdued and tuneful form of rock that is potentially radio friendly, but ultimately isn't because it's just a wee bit weird in ways that the general public can't quite figure out. Twenty-five or thirty years ago, this would be thrown into rotation on "college rock" playlists. I like it. —The Lord Kveldulfr (Dot Dash / The Beautiful Music)

DROPDEAD / RUIDOSA INMUNDICA: Split: 7"

Nearly a quarter century and Dropdead is still quite the ferocious beast and a hardcore punk force to be reckoned with. For the unacquainted, Dropdead play super-charged, early '80s Finn / Swede-inspired hardcore with just

about the same deafening impact of buildings being leveled by tanks falling from the sky. Speaking of which, the lone time I saw Dropdead was on the third story of a building in Los Angeles which shook so hard each time they played a song I seriously feared the floor would collapse beneath the feet of a hundred or so blissful punks. Ruidosa Inmundica follow along nicely and may even have a lesson to offer in insanity for their American split-mates. Three songs of new-arsehole-ripping hardcore with nods to Spanish kings E-150 and Los Angeles's criminally underrated / unknown Tragatelo. Dropdead have historically always teamed up with legendary acts for splits (Crossed Out, Totalitär, Unholy Grave, Converge, etc.) and this disc further solidifies that legacy. —Juan Espinosa (Armageddon Label)

DROPDEAD / SYSTEMATIC DEATH: Split: EP

Hands down one of the best Dropdead outings yet. They've slowed it down just a smidge and it has worked wonders. Some folks out there might be upset that it's not the relentless Siege-style assault they've been cranking out for the past couple decades, but I think this new direction is pretty good, and look forward to hearing more. It's high time for another LP. They're showing more depth in the songs, and the vocals have more bite too. Plus, these songs stick in your head after one listen. "Foundation" kicks the side off, and immediately worms its way into your brain. "Rise! Rise! The future



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is yours...". Then there's "The Final Chapter" that comes crashing down immediately after. Systematic Death kept it up with their fast and take-no-prisoners style of hardcore punk. There is a reason why they are legendary, and if you don't have any of their previous records, this is a great record to show you why they are held in the light they are. The songs rise with abandon, though they are not a white blur of noise. Instead, they have this intensity with tempo changes here and there, repetitive choruses (check out "Dashing"), and the interplay between the main vocals and the chorus. All together, it sounds like they are on the verge of collapsing into a huge mess. —M.Avrq (Armageddon)

DULAC: *The First of the Last Chords*: LP

This one's the stunner. Apparently the Frankfurt, Germany's scene is ready to grab up the U.S. and box us on the ears, yet you would never guess it from the band name or album art. It looks like a more modern Sub Pop release a shopper might pick up, thinking of Metz or Pissed Jeans. Instead Dulac comes from all over the post-punk map, first with a mid-era No Idea / Lemuria sound and ending the A-side with a Naked Raygun-inspired "Golem." Side-B is no less blistering, beginning with later Damned keyboard flourishes on "Take It" and then slamming home four more tracks that can't help but be held in the same regard as the genius of The Observers. *The First of the Last Chords* has gotten

better with every subsequent listen. Recommended...highly. —Matt Seward (Twintoe, twintoe.blogspot.com / Taken by Surprise, takenbysurprise.net / Crapoulet, crapoulet.fr)

DWIGHT TWILLEY BAND: "Shark" b/w "Burnin' Sand": 7"

This would have been the second single following Dwight Twilley's decently successful 1975 debut, "I'm on Fire." The release never happened (apparently due to bureaucratic concern over *Jaws*-related cheesiness) until HoZac came along to pick up the archival slack. A promo sticker declares Twilley "the missing link between Big Star, T.Rex and Tom Petty," which, frankly, about sums it up. "Shark" is a power pop tune with the sweetness of a summery Beatles jam, while the B-side takes a bit of a moodier turn. Had this single seen the light of day forty years ago, it might now be a lucky find in a cool uncle's 45 collection. Today, I am that cool uncle, and I feel better off for it. —Indiana Laub (Hozac, hozacrecords@gmail.com, hozacrecords.com)

ELECTRIC DATES, THE:

Self-titled: Cassette

Six-song demo cassette, recorded through what sounds like a single mic, which features some straight-ahead surf/garage rock. These songs are heavy on the hooks and feature largely snotty female vox which wouldn't sound out of place on '90s Lookout! albums. Not too shabby. —Michael T. Fournier (Shake!)

EMPIRE OF RATS: Self-titled: LP

Ohio certainly has a history of producing dark, vicious hardcore (Integrity, Ringworm, Pale Creation, ... *ahem*... One Life Crew) and goddamn, Empire Of Rats is no exception. Furious, metal-tinged, and right at home alongside the aforementioned elder statesmen, Empire Of Rats sounds like a band that's been doing this for years, which is high praise for a debut LP. There's not much reinvention of the proverbial wheel going on here, but when something's executed this well, it's difficult to complain. —Dave Williams (A389)

FATHER GREGORY: *Dental Knowledge and Meditation*: Cassette

Is this psychedelic rock? I think this might be psychedelic rock! Seven songs couched somewhere in that dark and iffy land between "aural soundscapes" and woefully, terminally damaged pop songs. Stretches pass in which verses and choruses and instruments are entirely decipherable, and then things devolve (Evolve? Maybe just *volve*?) into a growing, shifting tide of fuzz and buried instrumentation. Not for the faint-hearted. —Keith Rosson (Resurrection)

FERAL FUTURE: *Haematic*: LP

Anger gets me out of the bed in the morning. I'm angry that I have so much unfinished work. I'm angry that my students are neglected by their daytime teachers and their parents, that my dad got laid off after thirty years of loyalty,

and that my best friend *still* has to explain to men and women alike why she is a feminist. If you're angry, too, then *Haematic* will be your partner in crime. Put it down on the turntable. Let it bludgeon your cerebellum: you won't ever be the same. Musical minimalism is tricky, but Feral Future has all of their requisites fulfilled: unhampered ferocity, self-assured vocals, hard-hitting drums, agitated guitars, and acid-spewing indictments of oppressive bullshit. The record comes with a fold-out poster with a "trigger warning" for those who have suffered "sexual violence, and or, abuse." Feral Future approaches these topics with as much subtlety as a sledgehammer, but what's being said is important so it'd be wise to pay attention. "I wanna ruin you, because you've ruined me." This isn't revenge; it's justice. "These girls are tougher than your feeble attacks." This is support, community, and mutual respect. It's refreshing to hear yelled what often goes unsaid. My highest recommendation. —Sean Arenas (Western Medical, westernmedicalrecords.com)

FUTURE VIRGINS: *Late Republic*: LP

"The easiest years have come and gone / are you fading away, or are you holding on?" Those lyrics are from a Future Virgins song that came out five years ago. Since then they've released two full-lengths and a split 7" with Toys That Kill. Future Virgins aren't just holding on, they're digging in, pouring a foundation, and building a



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cathedral of a catalog that myself—and many others—are gladly finding some solace in. Their records play like heartfelt conversations had with close friends. When it finally comes to an end, you feel like you know and understand each other better. A rare interaction that doesn't happen nearly enough. It's a kind of exchange that usually requires either a great tragedy or a joyous celebration to occur. And like *Let It Be* (Replacements) or *Mush* (Leatherface), there's this intense emotional connection while still being flawlessly playable. A flexibility that works in multiple settings, whether it's being played as background music to laughter and beers cracking, or alone time, thinking time. The Future Virgins are more than any specification could ever grant them. College rock, power pop, even region rock, would all sell them short. It's just extraordinary music, that's being played through a DIY punk filter. In the turbulent seas of negativity, depression, and nihilism: this is hope for the punks. —Daryl (Recess)

GET DEAD: *Bad News*: CD

If you're going to be all literate and drop names like Kerouac and Bukowski in the first line of the first song on your CD, you're also required to know the difference between "there" and "they're." Get Dead's grammatical diligence is about equal to their knowledge of country music. They suffer from what I like to call "I listened to a few Johnny Cash records and I think I understand

country music" syndrome. There's some wimpy acoustic guitar strumming and songs about drinking, enough to give a little veneer of outlaw country on top of otherwise bland punk. At least until they start dropping the ska beats. Then shit gets kind of clever for a minute, but it's ruined by an acoustic slow jam about being tangled up in barbed wire or some equally bullshit bullshit. They should have made more use of the horn section. At least this music makes a good soundtrack to disappointment, even if it's the disappointment you feel because you're listening to this music. —MP Johnson (Fat)

GOLDEN PELICANS, THE: *"Burn Everything" b/w "Hell's Bucket": 7"*

"Burn Everything" is a pounding garage stomper that sounds like a condensed, nuclear powered, and slightly brain damaged Rolling Stones during the verses and like something else during choruses. You'll want to dig out the tiny scrap of a lyric sheet in order to decipher verbal emissions of the following caliber lodged amidst the scowling howling: "When I went up to your party / Watched you burn everything you own / You said your life has a sad soundtrack / Of some dumb Replacements song." That's heavy shit for a pelican. The B-side sounds similar, but without any discernable Replacements records. *This record smokes cigarettes in metal sheds which house fifty-five gallon drums of dangerous and flammable solvents! Flee whilst you can, little ones!* BEST SONG: "Burn Everything." BEST

SONG TITLE: "Burn Everything." FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: This is the first record I own where "BACKED WITH" is larger than any of the song titles. —Rev. Nørð (Pelican Pow Wow)

GUN CLUB, THE: *Lucky Jim*: LP

Recorded twelve years after *Fire of Love*, *Lucky Jim* (1993) showed that Jeffrey Lee Pierce was not one to rest on his laurels. Although in ill health, Pierce was at the height of his musical powers, backed by arguably the Gun Club's finest lineup: Romi Mori (bass) and Nick Sanderson (drums). Some of Jeffrey's best songs appear on *Lucky Jim*, notably the title track and "A House Is Not a Home." Jeffrey Lee was so far removed from his *Fire of Love*-era, psychotic-preacher persona by this point that no trace of it remained. Pierce was completely at ease with himself, no longer working within his limitations (with the exception of vocals—Jeffrey did a lot with a little) as he had long since honed his craft. The influence of Jimi Hendrix and electric blues are present on *Lucky Jim*. The Gun Club had completely moved away from a band centered on a clever, conceptual punk interpretation of the blues into a rock group that could do just about whatever it wanted. With *Lucky Jim*, Jeffrey Lee Pierce transitioned well into the '90s, with no signs of artistic weakness. Unfortunately, after years of substance abuse, it was his body that couldn't hold up. *Lucky Jim*, from all accounts, was a dismal record to make

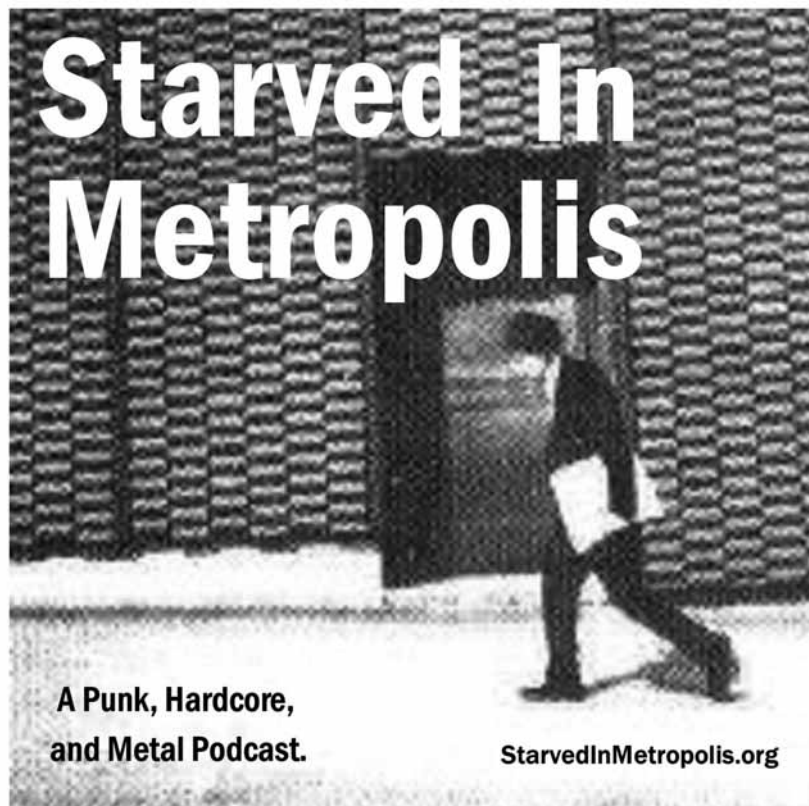
and the Gun Club's last. It's a shame this lineup of the Gun Club didn't continue, and an even greater shame that Jeffrey Lee Pierce passed away a short time later at only thirty-seven years of age. *Lucky Jim* was criminally ignored when originally released and, if I'm not mistaken, was only available on CD. That's disappointing, as the record ranks as one Jeffrey Lee's best. This vinyl reissue was long overdue and serves as a reminder of what an exceptional songwriter and musician Jeffrey Lee Pierce was. —Ryan Leach (Bang!)

HARD STRIPES: *Self-titled*: 7"

This excellent throwback NYHC-influenced 7" is the first from the new Richmond band Hard Stripes. Released by the folks at Richmond's fantastic record store Vinyl Conflict, this record is sure to turn the heads of people into classic, straightforward hardcore. As if the 1990s and 2000s never happened, this record well captures the 1980s tough guy sound, minus the bullshit tough guy mentality. —Art Ettinger (Vinyl Conflict)

HARRINGTON SAINTS: *Bettin' on a Longshot (The Singles Collection)*: LP

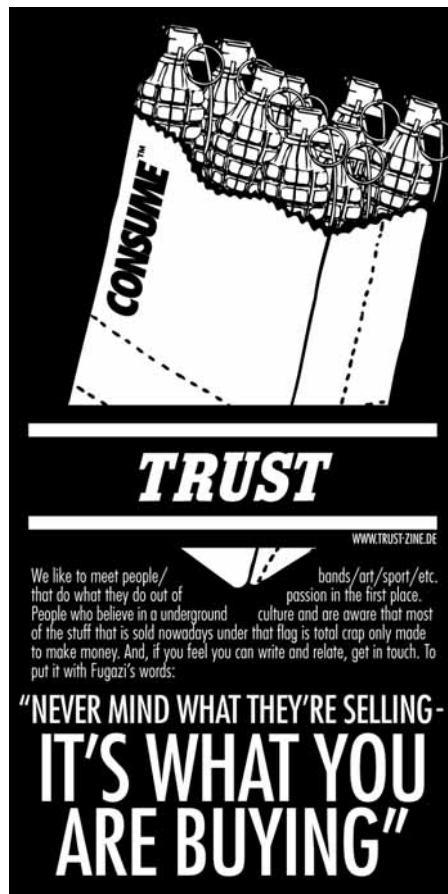
A roundup of the Bay Area oi band's singles from the past few years. Even though all the original singles are all still readily available, this collection is a nice, concise way to pick up the Saints' back catalog in one easy, cheap, and convenient record. As for the content, this should be the third Harrington Saints LP you grab. Their debut album,



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Dead Broke in the U.S.A., is excellent and their best, with the follow-up album a close second. The early singles here are decent but, in retrospect, you can tell the band was working up to something better. The later singles are solid, but still not quite as good as the albums. While another cover of Blitz's "Razors in the Night" is unnecessary, the cover of Angelic Upstarts' "I Won't Pay for Liberty" (aka "I Think It Should Be Free") is a welcome surprise and exclusive to this collection. It's an absolute classic Upstarts song but buried on a mid-'80s, hit-or-miss album and seldom heard; hopefully this excellent take on it leads some more people to its discovery. —Chad Williams (Step-1 / Longshot / Pirates Press)

HAYMAKER: *Let Them Rot: 7"*

This is by far the best thing Haymaker has done. And everything they've put out has been awesome. Incomparably angry Hamilton hardcore punk rock from the maniacs who gave us Left For Dead, Chokehold, and now Pick Your Side, this is the band's first release in a decade, and there are no signs of letting up in any way. Fast, thrashy, straightforward songs that just reek of Steeltown. The soundtrack to utter devastation (as the aftermath of any Haymaker show has proven). —Dave Williams (A389)

HEATHEN REIGN: *Self-titled: LP*

Pretty killer hardcore that hangs out closer to the metal side of the genre than the punk side, this band really knows what sound they're going for

and they do it well. Sludgy, heavy guitar dominates every song which melds well with a dark and muddy bass to create a serene, atmospheric backdrop for the abrasiveness of the vocals. Their singer treads carefully between screams of utter desperation and rage-filled disdain through abstract and vague lyrics of suicide, anger, and resentment. The songs are very much fueled by bleaker emotion, which is then splattered onto a canvas of controlled, chaotic ambience. They include a nice amount of well-timed breakdowns and dead air within their songs that add a tinge of introspection and nostalgia. This is a great record to listen to when you're mega pissed but would rather zone out than think about how fucked up everything is. Also, the record is a beautiful purple-dipped vinyl. —Kayla Greet (Self-released, bradwallacerecording.com)

HEAVY TIGER: *Saigon Kiss: CD*

I put this album on and was overcome at the amazing cock-rockiness of it. Turns out, the band is three broads from Denmark. How I could be surprised that "cock" is a state of mind, I'll never know. Duh! If you are looking for late Donnas-esque beer rock—those catchy choruses, party riffs, audible vocal snarls—you are really going to like this album. —Bianca (High Roller, hrrecords.de)

HOLIER THAN THOU?: *You Can't Have Slaughter without Laughter: 12" EP*

At long fucking last, the final recordings by crossover thrash revivalists Holier

Than Thou? have seen the light of day and it only took eight years. How things have changed since the early / mid 2000s: some of HTT's peers have found unexpected success and the white high-top Reeboks that come with it. A few of their friends have sadly passed on (Jason and Bomer from RKL, Derrick from Lagwagon, among others whom this record is dedicated to). All that heartbreak and confusion, however, resulted in a cathartic display of open-book-emotions to a soundtrack of their patented crossover hardcore punk onslaught which could have only resulted from a faithful and steady diet of RKL, Ill Repute, Stalag 13, and *Technocracy-era* Corrosion Of Conformity. Sadly, these eight songs serve as merely an afterthought since a good deal of the former band members have either given up music altogether or are involved in completely unrelated projects. It really is a pity that HTT? never got their due—but with any luck—this record will ignite renewed interest in the band who, in my humble opinion, not only kick-started the crossover-thrash renaissance (I highly recommend tracking down a copy of their first full-length *The Hating of the Guts*) but also set the standard which has since only been met but not surpassed. —Juan Espinosa (Six Weeks)

HORROR SECTION: *The Prowler: 7" EP*

The band wrote five songs (one's an instrumental) based on the 1981 dorm slasher, *The Prowler*, where a WWII vet murders his lover after getting a John Doe letter. Then, thirty-five years later,

the vet recreates the murder by hunting down college cuties. On Horror Section's EP of the same name, tracks like "Killer in the Dark" and "Directive Kill" recall the movie's conflict using tight, steady pop riffs with the simultaneously catchy and hypnotically droning harmonies of The Methadones or early Alkaline Trio. Sonically not bad, but *The Prowler* doesn't take off for me. On the screen, the nod and wink of a good horror movie helps to make the traumatization of young women tolerable, at least since in the final fifteen minutes, the persistent heroine usually chops the villain's head off with a gnarly shovel or whatever. Uninspired lyrics like "Hey Pam, do you wanna go out / I'm dying to know what you're all about" capture the level of ingenuity on *The Prowler*. In the end, you get four songs about a guy trying to kill a lady for dumping him, which even in the I'm-always-kidding one-dimensionality of goofball dudes is still weak. —Jim Joyce (Eccentric Pop, eccentricpop.com)

IN COLD BLOOD: *Suicide King: LP*

Finally. All of In Cold Blood's non-LP output (including everything recorded with original vocalist Jason Bourbon) collected and remastered as one cohesive release. Members of Integrity playing Cleveland-style hardcore along the lines of, well, Integrity, but with a bit more of a sludgy, for-the-throat vibe. Bleak, heavy, occasionally melodic, and peppered with solos that only Aaron Melnick could throw down. Crucial '90s hardcore. —Dave Williams (A389)



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INSULTS, THE: *Population Zero: 7"*

The Insults' second single gets another pressing from the original plates for those interested parties more interested in hearing the music than paying hyper-inflated prices for an original copy. Two blasts of primitive thud punk originally unleashed on the world by Ric-Mar Records in 1979, courtesy of the same band responsible for the endearingly obtuse "Stiff Love." While folks who think Emerson Lake & Palmer at their most cerebral will likely be horrified by this, those who like their tunes short and beyond simple will find much here to their liking. —Jimmy Alvarado (Last Laugh)

INTEGRITY: *7th Revelation: Beyond the Realm of the Witch: 7"*

For Baltimore label A389 Records' tenth annual bash, typically featuring most of the label's dark, hardcore / metal roster and often headlined by reunited or rarely-seen hardcore luminaries such as Left For Dead, Catharsis, etc., show-goers had the insane privilege of seeing, for the first time in twenty years, Integrity's *Systems Overload* lineup perform said record in its entirety. Considered by many to be the quintessential Integrity lineup and release, the reunited group also recorded one song during their rehearsals to coincide with the festival. And brother / sister, it is a doozy. Three-and-a-half minutes of classic Aaron Melnick/Frank Novinec riffs and leads, backed up by the amazing Lenny Melnick/Mark Konopka rhythm section,

howled over by Dwid's unmistakable voice, all sounding as vicious and urgent as they did two decades ago. Brilliant. —Dave Williams (A389)

INTEGRITY: *Black Heksen Rise: 7"*

Two tracks off of 2011's *Thee Destroy+ORR* compilation CD remastered and released as a 7". Why? Who knows? But I'm psyched to have it in my greasy paws. One of my favorite hardcore bands of all time, putting out some of the best stuff of their twenty-plus year career, thanks in no small part to the addition of new-ish guitarist and co-mastermind Robert Orr. For those not in the know, Integrity essentially set the standard for modern metallic hardcore with its debut LP, 1991's *Those Who Fear Tomorrow*, creating "Holy Terror hardcore" in the process, and has been steadily releasing bar-raising records since. Untouchable. —Dave Williams (A389)

J.J. & THE REAL JERKS:

In the Alleyway: CD

Here we have yet another fantastic EP from this great L.A. rock'n'roll band. The first tune, "Out of My Means," has a real Los Primos/Andy G And The Roller Kings vibe with the sax prominent in the sound. "Damaged Goods" brings back the sax for a more Michael Monroe vibe, which works incredibly well. This band is just an amalgam of all my favorite music and it is no surprise that I have loved everything they have released so far. I really need to get out to L.A. and see

them sometime, preferably with the Blessings or Pat Todd or Simon Stokes. This five-song EP is a must-buy for any fan of The Devil Dogs, Humpers, or good old fashioned punk rock'n'roll. —Mike Frame (KPCP)

JOINT D-:

Satan Is Real Again, Again...: LP

One o' those bands I've heard of, but never actually heard, Joint D- crank out some swell hardcore-based punkification here. Though they do get rambunctious on occasion, they never make a serious attempt to break the speed barrier or resort to similar cheap trickery. The guitar player often attacks his instrument in such a way that adds a layer of grinding/churning to the intensity of the band's performances, giving things a bit more heft while still retaining a viable level of tunefulness to the overall package. Less cerebral way of saying the same thing: they kick up dust without sacrificing an ounce of the rock. —Jimmy Alvarado (Sorry State)

KICKING SPIT: *Negative Feedback: LP*

Believe the image on the cover. This is a dangerous record that comes shrieking into your eardrums like the swirling propellers of the deliverers of death at the beginning of *Apocalypse Now*. Following in the footsteps of Dinosaur Jr. and shreddy labelmates Screaming Females, Kicking Spit seem intent on ripping steel from wood, tolex from tubes, and eyes from unhinged sockets. This is heavy, sludgy, noisy, relentless, garage punk. I am way down. One

(unpunk) request to the band, maybe just two-hundred more dollars on vocals and mixing next time? I love the crusty fidelity of this record but I just want to hear the vocals a little better. Okay, fine. I'm old. —Noah (Don Giovanni)

KOVAA RASVAA: *Ikuinen Piina: 7" EP*

A second EP of Finnish hyper-thrash less interested in Discharge worship than just making a racket. Tunes zip by angry and blistering. —Jimmy Alvarado (Svart, svartrecords.com)

L.A. DRUGZ: *Outside Place: 12" EP*

Wow, I really hate this band's name... but everything else about this is killer. This 12" offers six poppy, garagy, punk rock'n'roll tunes from ex-members of the Clorox Girls that reminds me of an equal mix of The Observers (vocally), the White Wires (musically), and, of course, a slowed down and less typically "punk" version of the Clorox Girls. This is likely a little too power pop to be widely accepted by the garage rock crowd, which is a shame because it's really good. —Mark Twistworthy (Hover Craft)

LAZARDS / SEEKRETS, THE: *Split: 7"*

Pretty cool split from Finland. The Seekrets play snotty punk rock—two girls in the front, one with a synth that gives them a Catholic Discipline vibe. There's a playfulness with The Seekrets music, not unlike Kleenex. While not nearly as brutal, fans of Black Time and primitive rock'n'roll will be into The Seekrets. The Lazards aren't too

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far removed from The Seekrets; they're a Spartan-sounding three-piece (guitar, synth, and drums). The opening track employs a drum machine/sequencer. Pressed on red vinyl. Recommended. —Ryan Leach (Blast Of Silence, facebook.com/blastofsilencerecords)

LAZARDS / SEEKRETS, THE: Split: 7"

Two new wave-inspired bands from Finland with guitars, synth, and talking vocals on both sides of this piece of red marble wax. While Lazards are more Suicide-esque gloom, sister-fronted Seekrets are devout believers in the campy fun of the B-52's and Shonen Knife. Extra points for awesome packaging: the triangle of liner notes is one of the cutest things I've ever seen. (It looks like a cootie catcher!) —Alanna Why (Blast Of Silence)

LIBYANS: Expired Language: LP

I avoid nostalgia. I'm too young to genuinely miss anything. Yet, every so often a band is labeled as the resurgence of "classic punk" or "real punk," as if these commentators remain paralyzed in the past and have only a hyper-shallow well of music terminology. These descriptors mean worse than nothing, they're a waste of breath. Let the dinosaur music journalists at *Rolling Stone* attempt to maintain their extinct relationship to "punk rock." Their "hot, young punk bands" aren't moving me. Libyans are sure to become a magnet for these types of labels. It would also be too easy to say that they're a return to form: angry,

youthful, conscientious, angular. These tags are overly simplistic as well as a major disservice to these Bostonians. Libyans are a well-oiled engine. They fire on all cylinders and crash into the eardrums, leaving an irreparable crater in the brain's right hemisphere. They are both a product of a continually unraveling history of discontent and an entirely unique entity. And, sure, they are angry, youthful, conscientious, and angular, but by no means are these songs nostalgic. Nostalgia is morphine, numbing the mind, slacking the jaw. Libyans are alert and aware, lurking in the foxhole of your subconscious and ensuring you remain rooted in present tense. Black Flag be damned. —Sean Arenas (Sorry State)

LINDSEYS: Religious Sexts: LP

Play it fast. Play it simple. Don't be afraid to be a little dumb (or very dumb). A stream of questionable lyrics for those who don't mind some crude attitudes and infectious, snotty choruses. Don't forget to cut out all the musical frills. Play it stripped-down, raw. F.Y.P and Hickey are accurate comparisons. 'Nuff said. I dig it. —Sean Arenas (Off The Books, offthebooksemail@gmail.com)

LIPSTICK HOMICIDE: Out Utero: LP

One thing that I love about female-fronted pop punk is that it strips away any misogyny that shows up in male-oriented songs about relationships. The Screeching Weasels and Queens of the three chord world are usually

throwing the blame of failure onto the shoulders of women while skirting any responsibility of their own. Lipstick Homicide is completely aware of this unheard perspective and manages to stay honest—as opposed to falling in with—the same tactics of the male counterpart. This three-piece out of Iowa is very lyrically driven and showcase themes of insecurity, self-motivation, and success over a strong and clean rock'n'roll guitar, bubbly bass, and snappy drums that never overshadow Kate and Rachel's vocal melodies. Musically, they never get as harsh as their lyrics and hold on to a sweet, poppy sound throughout the album. This record is great for summertime listening after you've dumped your boyfriend for not being awesome enough. And as an added bonus, super rad album artwork from Tom Lowell! —Kayla Greet (Bloated Kat)

LUMPY AND THE DUMPERS: "Gnats in the Pissa" b/w "Ghoul Breath": 7"

There was a time, not that long ago even, that I might not have dug a band like Lumpy And The Dumpers. I would have thought them too scream-y, maybe too hardcore-tinged punk. Thanks to Total Punk, my ears have opened again to more "punk" sounding punk, a change from the lo-fi garage punk that is my drug of choice. Maybe it's the boom-box fuzz-fi that makes me like 'em? Their name is fantastic, and the liner notes have the singer performing in a diaper, so I gotta check 'em live if they ever come my way. Also, I managed

to score a mis-printed copy (limited to twenty-five, I believe) where side A has the label to a Manatees 7" that Total Punk released simultaneously. —Sal Lucci (Total Punk)

LUNCH:

Quinn Touched the Sun: Cassette

Lunch starts out strong with a jangling, psych-garage sound, the singer lamenting the popularity of a fellow named Johnny Pineapple with a frustrated shout, setting the tone for a fun, trippy, psych garage ride. The next song builds on this, adding more distortion to the vocals. They prove themselves contenders, but they start to lose momentum on the second side. The first side rocks harder and with more bite. Don't get me wrong, I play the whole tape every time but the songs don't stand out as much. However, this is their first full-length and they end on a high note with the driving stomp of "Hex Meat" showing a lot of promise. —Craven Rock (Resurrection, resurrectionrecords666@yahoo.com)

M.O.T.O.: Shitty Kids: 7" EP

I saw M.O.T.O. perform to a rather empty bar last summer, which baffled me as Paul Caporino's extensive catalog only has a couple of stinkers. But then I started thinking about how I won't touch certain bands because of the size of their catalog and the intimidation factor of not knowing where to start. So, if you are wondering where to start with M.O.T.O., the truth is probably anywhere will be just fine. Now that



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that's been settled, Mr. Caporino presents three new M.O.T.O. songs on this one, and, per usual, they are damn fine. The opener and eponymous track displays more of Paul's punk tendencies, while the other two songs demonstrate his signature take on older rock, like Del Shannon. All three are recorded cleanly, and some better with each listen. If ya like M.O.T.O., then there ain't no reason not to grab this. The only question that remains is, are the crude, no-fi recordings as gone from M.O.T.O.'s repertoire as the black pigment from Paul's hair? —Vincent (Secret Mission)

MAKABERT FYND / FEAR OF EXTINCTION: Split: 7"

Somebody woke up on the wrong side of the dirty mattress in the punk squat this morning! Not that it's a competition, since neither of these bands seems particularly happy about the state of the world, but Makabert Fynd is a tad angrier. This is the musical equivalent of bulging forehead veins. It's relentless, grab-you-by-the-neck, patch-wearing crusty hardcore, and it's definitely worth repeat listening. —MP Johnson (Phobia, phobiarecords.net)

MALL'D TO DEATH: Collection Tape: Cassette

Collection Tape, my first hearing of Minnesotan pop punk dudes, Mall'd To Death, is a tape that jams all their previous EPs into a single release. The general feel is something poppier—there are pogo moments and jittery

palm mutes aplenty—but you get the feeling Mall'd To Death have listened to everything under the punk sun, or at least everything at Treehouse Records. Remember Krang, the squealing tentacle creature in *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, the animated series? This is what happens when Krang escapes his robot suit, kidnaps Chris Hannah, and fronts Propagandhi. Or if Krang had a baby brother who followed global news, only ate Cheetos, loved the Suicide Machines, and wrote punk pun song titles like "Nervous Breakup" and "The Hymns Of J Church," Mall'd To Death would be his band. Scrappy pop punk and more! And it'll only cost you four bucks. What else do you want? —Jim Joyce (Passion On Plastic, passiononplastic.com)

MERCY KILLINGS: Self-titled: 7" EP

This debut EP by a band comprised of former members of Direct Control, Wasted Time, and Violent Outburst grabs you by the boo-boo right from the beginning and shakes you around like a ragdoll for, oh, a little over twelve minutes before tossing your concussed carcass in a heap. Sinewy, non-meathead hardcore that bashes and thrashes with the best its progenitors ever kicked up. —Jimmy Alvarado (Beach Impediment)

MINDLESS: Planet of Pestilence: 7" EP

Planet of Pestilence is Mindless's newest release following 2010's cassette, *Human Conditioning*. Faiza Kracheni and friends kill it again. With

nine quick songs, Mindless balance the shred and sludge of their last EP with noticeable melody. "Contamination" is a slow, pummeling march, the sonic equivalent of that eye-stabbing scene Fulci's *Zombi*—visceral and gleefully gratuitous. I don't have a great ear for grinding faster hardcore groups, but what stays with me is Kracheni's throaty roar (harsher than on the last cassette) and the total virtuosity of the band, which can halt on a dime and join the violence of percussion with the musicality of their billowing and smoky guitar-driven storms. If Hatred Surge or the Endless Blockade were ever your thing, or if you grabbed the last Mindless cassette, *Planet of Pestilence* is worth the follow up. —Jim Joyce (To Live A Lie, tolivealie.com)

MISERY:

From Seeds That We Have Sown: LP

I was not expecting this at all! There was a period towards what I had thought was the end of their run that they were putting out a lot of "meh" records. Then Donofthedeath loans this to me and says to review it. This is pretty damn good. Up there with their early releases, and worthy of the original excitement they had generated with records like *Production Thru Destruction* (which I remember selling out of during one of my first shifts at Epicenter. You would not believe how many people were completely stoked to get that record), and *Who's the Fool...* As soon as I heard the acoustic guitars and the vocals from Cassandra

Schorn, I knew this was going to be an interesting record. "Midnight" brings to mind Amebix, with its plodding metal style, but Misery bring in a little more heaviness with the up and down repetitive swing of the bass and drums, while the guitar rings out over them. Then there is the way the bass comes in on "New Years" with a distorted churn that grabs your attention and won't let go, as the drums and guitar come in, building in intensity that reaches a steady simmer. So fuggin' good! Plus, any band like this that covers Chrome ("3rd from the Sun") and makes it sound like one of their own, gets eternal respect from me. I'm going to have to get my own copy. —M.Avrq (Inimical)

MISSING MONUMENTS: Blast!: 7"

This is my first exposure to Missing Monuments. I'm a fan of King Louie. The band has hooks and the dedication to the rainbow of hard rock is apparent on this record. "Blast" is a Southern fried rocker with hint of Detroit in the aggression. "Covered in Ice" keeps the twang with a catchier, Cheap Trick-esque chorus. "Ghost HWY" is a traveler. It's a solid three-on-the-tree. —Billups Allen (Slovenly)

MISSING MONUMENTS: Self-titled: CD

My roommate's boyfriend came home while I was listening to this CD for review, and I got embarrassed. I wanted to scream that I was only listening to this hard-rockin' power pop because I needed to write about it—and I did explain myself, but in a calm manner.

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Anyhow, I don't have some insatiable desire for power pop such that I would even listen to power pop laden with hard rock guitar noodling with raspy vox on most songs. The cover isn't helping much, either: The band members—two of whom look like southern dirt rockers, and the other two look like grown dweebs who met in high school guitar class—standing in front of a blown-up image of diamond-plated steel. Definitely not for me. —Vincent (Dirtnap)

MODFAG: *Paradisio*: LP

Age doesn't give you taste, but it does give some history and perspective and I dare a sixteen-year-old me to digest as much music as I have over the past thirty odd years. Modfag sound familiar, I lived this vibe, lived this sound. The early nineties was littered with bands influenced by the late seventies Radio Birdman, Saints, et al. who were in turn influenced by the Sonics, Elevators, or Stones. Modfag are a throwback bar band that could easily have found space on labels like Big Neck, Empty, or Estrus. Drunk dudes in stripy shirts and bowl cuts kicking out the fucking jams in some shithole bar in Houston. My kinda fellows. Best thing about these dudes is they have no Internet presence; they just get their shit done in Houston. Feeling it. —Tim Brooks (Little T&A, littleandarecords.bigcartel.com)

MONJO, LOS:

La Vida Que Los Envidian: LP

Mostly mid-tempo punk from Guadalajara that recalls '80s Mexican

bands like Rebel'd Punk and Sindrome Del Punk, minus maybe the overt references to other genres those bands occasionally dropped into their sound. Can't say it's crucial, but they do what they do well, and I'm betting their gigs are quite lively and participatory. —Jimmy Alvarado (Discos MMM, discosmmm.com)

MULTICULT: *"Jaws" b/w "Luxury"*: 7"

Following up 2012's *Spaces Tangled*, Multicult maintains their rep, boiling off the excess of dreary post-punk and dropping in fizzy chords. Firmly planted on a fat, meaty bass hook, "Jaws" opens up like a track in a chase scene—focused, earnest in its pursuit mimicking A Place To Bury Strangers steeped in hydrochloric acid or the wordless, nefarious hunter vs. prey beats of French electro bad boys, Gesaffelstein And The Hacker. Their take on this instrumental blueprint has the guitar at center stage punctuated by crashing cymbals and zombie mumble vocals that melt into the onslaught. In comparison, "Luxury" is almost funky. Like "Jaws," a jangly baritone bass line serves as nucleus for the flip side, alternating from '70s guitar blitz like a Cream hook turned inside out, then back to the bass. These two jams make me hopeful for another full length. Recommended. —Kristen K. (Reptilian, reptilianrecords.com)

MURMURS: *Fly with the Unkindness*: LP

This eight track album features seven great songs and one that is nothing short of perfection. Across both sides of

the record, Murmurs cranks out gritty, melodic punk rock that is infectious and well crafted. However, on "Thirty Five Summers," there is just over three minutes of musical synergy that results in a track so sublime it's almost impossible to do it justice with mere words. From the moment I heard the sweet opening salvo of the guitar I was left in a jibbering heap, with my condition only being compounded as the rest of the song fell into place, leaving me in a state of awe. If I said that the song was anything other than *BLOODY AWESOME*, I'd be selling it short—the guitars, the rhythm section, and the vocals blend together magnificently to highlight a stunning piece of song writing and execution. It's not often I hear something as outstanding as "Thirty Five Summers," hence my unfettered exuberance. —Rich Cocksedge (Dead Broke / Drunken Sailor)

MYTHOLOGICAL HORSES: *Self-titled*: LP

Recorded and engineered by big-name '90s grunge muck-a-mucks Tad Doyle and Jack Endino, respectively, this quintet of Seattleites—thankfully—isn't an updated version of Sub Pop Bong Rock, but more of a ramshackle version of upbeat, category-muddling, Pacific Northwest pop / rock / punk bands of that era like Flop and Bum (well, Bum were from Canada, so I guess that'd make it the Pacific Southwest then, wouldn't it?), occasionally wandering into straight-up Mutant Pop Records territory. The singer's uniquely goony pipes

recall early helium-sniffers like Joey Vindictive, and the band doesn't seem sure if they wanna write serious two-guitar boy-girl songs, or sing about fucking someone after the show, in the snow. All the same, not a bad record to play at that exact time of day when the sun starts going down and at the end of side two the little lights on your stereo receiver are pretty much the only illumination in the house and you gotta put the lights on and make a sandwich. Observations like these are why I get paid the big bucks here. BEST SONG: "All Alone." BEST SONG TITLE: "Dancing Tonight." FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: There's an album in one side of the gatefold sleeve and a download code in the other. I call that the "Rock'n'Roll Mastectomy." —Rev. Nørð (Hovercraft, mythologicalhorses.bandcamp.com)

NEW COKE:

Duct Tape Your Mouth: 7" EP

Brittle guitars saturated in distortion, stomping rhythms, garage feel to the tunes, and twisted, violent lyrics: "I am drunk, I shot a man, I'm okay." Somehow it all comes together quite nicely. Three tunes to make ye squirm while bobbing your head in time. —Jimmy Alvarado (Slovenly)

NOFX: *Stoke Extinguisher*: CDEP

What we have here is essentially an odds'n'sods CDEP from the most consistent band in the world. More or less, it's an excuse to showcase the title track. Why not, right? The track

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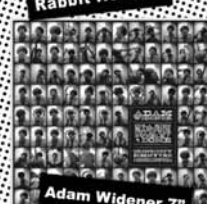
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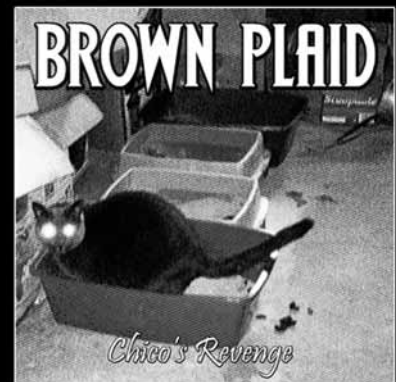
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"Stoke Extinguisher" is what you'd expect from the band at this point. Right on par. If anything, it has more of an Orange County vibe to it than usual. Maybe even the Adolescents. Can't complain about that. The remainder of the disc contains alternate versions of previously released tracks from singles within the last year or two. Which, if you're an avid NOFX vinyl collector, you already have somewhere in your collection. These guys have proven that they never really intend on slowing down, or keeping up. —Steve Adamyk (Fat Wreck Chords, fatwreck.com)

NOT TONIGHT AND THE HEADACHES: Love...And Other Weapons of Mass Destruction: CD

Who would have thought that a resurgence of pop punk straight from the late 1980s and early 1990s would have its roots in Grimsby, a relatively small town on the east coast of England? This transports me back to a time when the Hard-Ons, Unwritten Law, and Big Drill Car (and much later All Systems Go!) were in their prime and I must also give the band credit for a corking version of Jane Wiedlin's "Rush Hour." It's definitely music for those with, or those seeking, a sunny disposition. —Rich Cockledge (Boss Tuneage / Anarchy Entertainment)

NOTCHES: Normal Demo: Cassette

I read an ad describing these guys as "alt-infused pop punk," a description that really sells the band short. That's sort of like calling Creedence

Americana-influenced rock. I wouldn't even call Notches a pop punk band. There's some pop and there's some punk, but nothing of the genre that comes to mind when I hear those words together. Notches is more like '90s rock, but with all of its strengths and none of its weaknesses. I'm hearing so much here I love, from the Nirvana riff on the first song and Superchunk on the second to more subtle nods to Archers Of Loaf, Weezer, Rocket From The Crypt, and Dinosaur Jr. It's full of bouncing bass lines and melody hidden under lots of guitar distortion. The songs are upbeat but simultaneously melancholy in a navel-gazing way. Closer listening reveals most of the songs are about rejection and confusion. His pain, however, is quite a joy to listen to. As this spring continues its wayward course, raining one hour and sunny the next, this is the perfect soundtrack. My guess, it stays in the tape deck through summer, too. —Craven Rock (Hip Kids)

NOX BOYS: Self-titled: CD

Upon first glance at their cover art, Nox Boys seem heavily influenced by 311. However, their sound is more rock'n'roll with Spaghetti Western undertones. This is especially apparent on the track "Susie Lee" which I enjoyed because it conjured images of pompadours and sock hop romance. However, the rest of the album tends to blur together into one long and little-varied song. The slurred out lyrics don't say much of anything. In fact, the last track, aptly titled "Save

Me," was so repetitive in their plea of "you gotta save me" it left me throwing my hands up in the air from frustration wanting to know "From *what*?" —Ashley (Get Hip)

OBSESSOR: Obsession Collection: LP

Incarnated as the one-man recording project of Brandon Ferrell, Obsessor worships at the altar of thrash metal. It's not new territory, but Obsessor succeeds at paying homage to all that have come before, while scorching their own brand onto the face of the genre. Ferrell demonstrates not only his technical chops with each instrument, but also a keen ear for song-writing. From the opening thunder of the track "Obsession," to the end of the A-side, there's nothing but one ripper after another. It's clear that in addition to good song-writing, a good amount of thought was put into song order, bearing the vinyl format in mind. After the quiet of flipping the record and the hiss of the groove as the needle catches, the B-side opener "In Fear of the End" has a nice feedbacking fade-in before the furious riffing of the song itself takes over. Subtleties like these make for a better listening experience than merely jamming songs in an arbitrary order. Lyrically, Obsessor doesn't stray far from the topical norm of the genre. Songs about living and dying by the sword, mental instability, the evils of political leaders, and the end of the world all feature on this record. While it's not new ground, I found the lyrics pretty solid. There's no overabundance

of clichés or the kind of lines which cause head-shakes, or inward groans. Tankcrimes is a label known for their quality vinyl packaging, and this release is no exception. The artwork throughout is badass. Pick this up, and you too will be Obsessed! —Paul J. Comeau (Tankcrimes)

OCCULTONOMY: Self-titled: Cassette

You're out skating alone late at night. You're lost in the tunes blaring out of your walkman. Suddenly you notice that the moon is closer than it should be. The wheels of your board are rolling through the night sky. You're in space. It's peaceful, but peace isn't really what you're looking for. You want to shred. You pop this tape in and turn it up. The weirdo thrashcore melts your ears as you carve through the stars. You sing along: "I just wanna thrash someplace in outer space!" It's a good night. —MP Johnson (Reality Is A Cult)

OWLS: Two: CD/LP

Two is a complex follow-up to the band's debut thirteen years ago. The lineup is still the same (Cap'n Jazz minus Davey von Bohlen) and the sound is similar to their self-titled album, but it doesn't seem quite as accessible. Yes, it's a little Cap'n Jazz and a little Joan Of Arc (considering the Kinsellas are involved, that's understandable), but the lyrics seem more obscure than even that which is usual for Tim Kinsella ("I'll never be some scientist hero action wizard" or "a waiter with bad breath / he dropped

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your chilled pickle in hot sand"). The guitar playing is creative and the bass keeps things tight and rhythmic. Mike Kinsella's drumming could've stood to be more creative, though. Much of it seemed formulaic and didn't match the creativity of Victor Villareal's guitar or Tim's lyrics. While, on the whole, the parts seem good, put together they just come out to be average. There's nothing that amazed or enthralled, but one can't deny that the band is creative and intelligent. It's these types of albums that are the hardest to review and *Two* proves no exception. This is an album that, while solid, is probably best left to hardcore devotees of the Kinsellas. —Kurt Morris (Polyvinyl, polyvinylrecords.com)

P.L.F.: *Devious Persecution and Wholesale Slaughter*: CD

"I barely listen to grindcore at all anymore, but when I do I listen to P.L.F." (Referencing that beer commercial.) But yeah, I think the majority of grind these days is pure crap. However, P.L.F. stand head and shoulders, miles ahead of the pack. They don't come close to reinventing the wheel, but what they do is bring some much needed intensity to the genre that hearkens back to the glory days of this kind of music. Like when Earache was putting out records you would actually be excited about. Their music is sonic, with a huge wall of sound, and dual vocals, one low, and one sort of "vomity." I prefer the low vocals, as it blends in better with the heaviness, while the vomity vocals are

sort of like hearing some sand blasting at four in the morning. Then they do things like incorporate a Motörhead-style rhythm amongst all the pummeling riffs, such as in the title track, then there are the riffs that are relentless, such as "Port of Chicago Disaster." There's a reason why these guys have a following. —M.Avrq (Six Weeks)

PARASOL: *Not There*: LP

Really good, sleeper of a record. There are a lot of adjectives at work here: scrappy, searching, yearning, nuanced. Heartfelt and careworn. The vocalist sounds eerily like Lauren from the Measure/Worriers and the woman from Siren Songs. The songs are melodic and punchy and just a little ragged at the seams. Recommended for fans of the aforementioned bands or labels like Salinas and Kiss Of Death. Actually, screw that: it's just across-the-board recommended. Give it a shot. This one's gotten a lot of plays recently, and don't see that stopping any time soon. —Keith Rosson (Lauren)

PEOPLE PROBLEM:

***Maximum Perversion*: 7"**

A foray into the trusty sound of crusty hardcore that was all the rage (at least among my group of degenerates) in the early- to mid-'90s. If that's your bag, you probably can't miss with this. This is a solid record if only because it's got a sound that I like, at least in spirit, even if I've heard it before. Green vinyl! —The Lord Kveldulfr (Coffincut)

PITFALL: *Self-titled*: 7"

Tough-as-nails hardcore from Illinois. It's muscular and pounding, but retains a tunefulness that pushes the gang vocals into oi territory. I'm hearing '80s NYHC like Life's Blood, maybe a couple pre-Rollins Black Flag riffs, and the sound of cinderblocks turning to powder. That's Ebro from Charles Bronson on the mic...and drums. I think this is their demo, missing a couple songs. —Chris Terry (Deranged)

PLAN OF ATTACK:

***Stick to Your Guns*: LP**

Tattoo flash-styled album art of a pirate ship. Gorgeous red/orange/black splattered vinyl. Gruff, thick-necked oi with a propensity for wanky guitar solos. Lamentations about the workaday world, backstabbers, and binge drinking. Contains the immortal song title "Glass Half Fucked," which has to be one of the funniest things I've ever read in my life. This label has some truly fantastic, convincing bands on their roster (Stranglehold, The Ratchets, Smalltown, Bombshell Rocks, Downtown Struts to name just a few) but Plan Of Attack unfortunately has some work ahead of them to reach that stature—*Stick to Your Guns* is a competent enough aping of the streetpunk genre (and maybe that's all they're shooting for) but for this listener, they're gonna need a little something-something to separate them from the bevy of other bands that are tilling this particular field. —Keith Rosson (Pirates Press)

POWERBLESSINGS:

***Quick Guide to Heart Attacks*: LP**


Coliseum rock...the band, not an arena. Ripping guitar leads and dark, obtuse lyrics. Some screaming (good), some singing (eh...). The songs have enough hook to interest, but may fail to burrow into memory without repeated listening. The production sounds thin at times, which could have delivered the dynamics to make this a slam dunk, but may prevent those repeated listening. Solid effort and a band that I imagine would deliver live. I'd like to put the LP and live pieces of the puzzle together and call myself a fan. —Matt Seward (Manhattan Chemical And Electronic, manhattanchemicalandelectronic.bigcartel.com)

PYPY: *Pagan Day*: CD

CPC Gangbangers were a Montreal institution. As a matter of fact, the same goes for any other Roy "Choyce" Vuccino's projects. Namely, Red Mass; who began to appear as if they were slowing down, given the extreme pace of releases they unleashed over the last number of years. Yet—coincidentally, while Red Mass are back at it on tour with King Khan & The Shrines—it all makes sense now, with the launch of PYPY. To top it off, the work that went into this album really shows. Vocal duties are shared, almost equally, with ex-Dutchess Says members, which makes Pagan Day even more dynamic. It'd be easy to compare them to Thee Oh Sees or The Stooges, but the latter makes much more sense. The apple doesn't fall far from the tree for Choyce. Point being,

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anyone familiar with his work won't be shocked by the outcome. It's extremely well recorded. Not far from Red Mass's self-titled album on Semprini. Yet, these tracks still have enough calculated grit to make it far from clean. A fine line that's hard to achieve, and they've nailed it. One of the best releases of the year, thus far. —Steve Adamyk (Slovenly)

RAMBLIN' JEFFREY LEE:

Self-titled: 2 x LP

If you're looking for a Gun Club record, you may be disappointed by *Ramblin' Jeffrey Lee*. As Cypress Grove, Jeffrey's collaborator on *Ramblin' Jeffrey Lee*, points out in the liner notes—*Ramblin' Jeffrey Lee* enters into vanity record territory. Instead of his usual blues-punk hybrid, Jeffrey performs straight blues interpretations on *Ramblin' Jeffrey Lee*, covering songs by Howlin' Wolf, Skip James, Charley Patton, and Don Nix ("Goin' Down"). Jeffrey was at his musical peak when this album was recorded (1992), and his desire to do a blues record was a reflection of his reverence for the genre that gave him a career. If you're a seasoned Gun Club fan, this reissue is an absolute must; Jeffrey's version of "Go Tell the Mountain" is worth the price of admission alone. Bang! did a great job with the packaging (double LP gatefold). —Ryan Leach (Bang!)

RECENTLY DECEASED, THE:

Never Trust the Living: CD

I thought horror punk had to include some rockabilly horseshit or a direct

Misfits bite, but maybe all you have to do is have some spooky art and sing about being dead or whatever to pass, because with *The Recently Deceased* you mostly get clean metal licks while two singers trade off singing parts, sticking to those macabre themes. They try out all sorts of vocal styles, biting everyone from Danzig to Lux Interior to Dio and fail at all of them, sounding like a choked Bruce Springsteen, a vigorous karaoke singer, or, at their very worst, Homer Simpson (really!). The galloping power chords switch to gothic power ballads about being in love with the undead or some shit. All are well-played but don't really succeed on any level. As someone who already thinks horror punk is shticky, cheesy, and trite, *The Recently Deceased* certainly didn't sway my opinion, but they're not *completely* without charm. I'm not reaching for something nice when I say this two-piece really seems to love what they're doing, snotty critics be damned. Sure, I could say this about plenty of sucky bands I've reviewed here but I don't. They really do stand out in that way, not enough to make me listen to it more than once, but there is that. They dedicate this album to their former band member and buddy who "(chose) a family and a life of saving lives over playing music" by joining the Baltimore City Firefighters. That's kind of sweet. —Craven Rock (1332)

RESURRECTIONISTS:

Working Class Since 1832!: 10"

Very strange, goth-infused, slow, and brooding, this 10" is the sort of

creative experiment that can give a conventional listener nightmares. Very well executed, from the recording on down, I don't really understand what Resurrectionists are going for, but I'm not entirely against it. The cover artwork pays tribute to the early days of rock'n'roll, but the music is anything but danceable. Simultaneously interesting and frightening, *Working Class Since 1832!* is a hard nut to crack. —Art Ettinger (Resurrection, getresurrected.com)

REVENGE OF THE PSYCHOTRONIC

MAN: In Session from Maida Vale: 7"

A recent BBC session from a seasoned Manchester band. I might have pegged them for Californians, considering that these four tracks sound like they're pulled straight from the hardcore side of '90s skate punk. The frontman spits out snotty political lyrics at lightning speed, about fifteen syllables per second, while the rollicking basslines recall the first couple of AFI albums. Simple and straightforward, but fun. —Indiana Laub (5 Feet Under, kontakt@5feetunder.com, 5feetunder.com / Boss Tuneage, bosstuneage.com / Entes Anomicos, recontrapunk@hotmail.com, freewebs.com/entes / TNS, info@tnsrecords.co.uk, tnsrecords.co.uk)

RITUAL ADDICT:

Obediently into Nowhere: LP

Ritual Addict play snotty and fast hardcore punk and they are awesome at it—seriously one of the best bands playing this style at the moment. Made

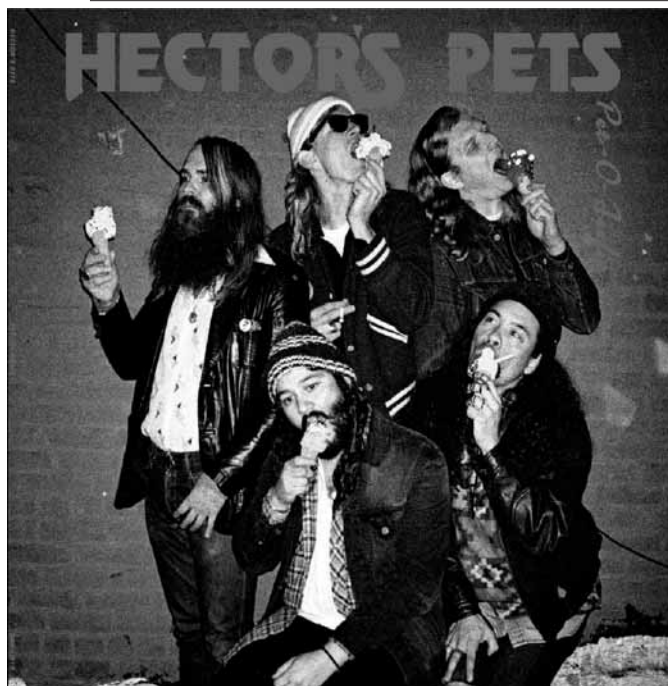
up of ex-members from many Seattle bands, this is some real Bay Area style hardcore: fast, snotty, and great. Folks who buy the majority of releases from labels like Prank, Life Is Abuse, and Six Weeks are going to want to snap up this LP on the double. Reminds me of many bands on the great European label Kangaroo as well, just a great band that is influenced by Poison Idea, Verbal Abuse, and the like. Top recommendation for this record and I am hoping to hear more from Ritual Addict. —Mike Frame (Enemy Closer, ritualaddict.blogspot.com)

RITUAL CONTROL: *No Affinity: 7"*

Four tracks of gate-crashing Bay Area hardcore. The female vocals screech and wail over the dense, heavy instrumentation. The tempo changes will satisfy fans of both thrashy and sludgy hardcore. Features members of Condition, No Statik, and Effluxus. As you can expect, nothing but the highest quality from Residue. —Daryl (Residue)

RITUAL CONTROL: *No Affinity: 7"*

This is scathing metallic SF hardcore punk at its finest. Everything you'd expect from a band consisting of members of No Statik, Condition, and Effluxus among others. *No Affinity* is clean, tightly wound, a kind of immaculate chaos; chaos that gathers, writhes, explodes with depths of rage, then—just as fast as it begins—it ends. Ethan's vocals are harsh, tough as nails, but adds a certain emotive



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quality that lingers and leaves me a bit uneasy. Which is the point. It gets you slightly off kilter. Anything that pacifies has questionable motives. —Camylle Reynolds (Residue)

ROSS JOHNSON & JEFFREY EVANS: Vanity Session: LP

This duo has a lot of Memphis pedigree. The sessions on this record are covers and originals created during Johnson and Evans's longstanding barroom act, which I know nothing about, but sure hope to seek out. Lots of cronky rock'n'roll with the seams showing. The barroom feel comes across on the record. The highlight for me is a wilting version of "I've Had It." It sounds really out of control in the best way. If you close your eyes and hold a beer under your nose, you can imagine you're in a sleazy nightclub in Memphis. —Billups Allen (Spacecase, spacecaserecords.com)

RUST: Rough Ready & Razored: 7"

When I saw a record with combat boots, skulls, and shaved heads, I expected to find street punk or oi on the inside. Although they borrow many elements from both genres, Rust is neither. Straight up rock 'n' roll with a heavy Motörhead influence, Rust powers through formulaic AA BB rhyming couplets, split up with ripping guitar riffs and gang vocals on nearly every chorus. Sticking loyally to the rock mantra, there are songs about murder, being a punk, and prostitution which, strangely, includes some jazzy guest female vocals. "The Curse of Rock

N Roll" is like a two minute who's who music history lesson with a whopping total of eleven musicians referenced. Fans of Lemmy, New Bomb Turks, and AC/DC's brand of rock will enjoy this fast-paced record, though it's not anything you could ever love. Rust makes a fair attempt at replicating a classic genre and putting a punk twist on it, but I just can't see anyone singing along to lyrics like, "Up in the morning and I play some ska / Drink my coffee from a jar / Got me some kids, got me a wife / Skinhead anthems a way of life / Boots, buckles, Motörhead, punk rock, skinhead" without feeling totally embarrassed. —Kayla Greet (Longshot Music)

SALTEENS, THE: Whiskey & Records: 7"

Well, this just fucking rules! Five tracks recorded in the mid '90s from Minneapolis, MN's The Salteens. This band features members that went on to be in bands such as The Soviettes, Cleveland Bound Death Sentence, and The Gateway District. This is a pop punk time bomb that's taken twenty years to detonate. A blinding explosion of bouncing, wild-eyed energy via youthful punk being fueled by the Twin Cities basement circuit. How have we survived this long without this 7"? No joke, this is mandatory listening for anyone who likes the bands mentioned above, Dillinger Four, Dear Landlord, or newer bands like Lipstick Homicide. —Daryl (25 Diamonds, info@25diamonds.com)

SANDS, THE: Hotel & Casino: LP

The goofy band name/album title pun (the band's name is "The Sands" and their album is called *Hotel & Casino*, get it? Yeah, me too) and could-be-anything packaging (on closer inspection, the album cover is actually a black and white photo of an old pachinko machine) had me fearing that this was going to be eight songs of dire stoner rock at worst, or, given the band's Bloomington, IN, origins, a shoddy Gizmos retread at best. It was not. It is fan-fucking-tastic power pop. *The Neighborhoods! The Beat! The Strangeways! Maybe the Raspberries! I can't remember now!* This is one of those records that just clears the tedium out of your brain like isopropyl alcohol clears the gunk out of your pot pipe, leaving you wondering what the hell all these other bands were thinking when they made all these other records which are clogging up your home. It's one of those rare occasions when it strikes you that your life must have been a remarkable series of correct choices, just because it has led you to listening to this record at this moment, so how could you have possibly gone wrong along the way? Fucking outstanding I say, and, with a mere two hundred copies pressed, the reader would be well advised to move quickly on this one, lest existing supplies drain away like... heh... *sands* through the hourglass. Yup, I just said that. BEST SONG: "Catch and Release." BEST SONG TITLE: "Damn Heavy Heart." FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: This is the first new album I've gotten in the last twenty-five or thirty

years where the inside of the jacket was unbleached tan, not white. —Rev. Nørð (Houseplant/Let's Pretend)

SCAPHE: Self-titled: 7"

This sounds like a bunch of crusty kids got obsessed with free jazz or the Minutemen or something. Yes, there are drawings of dudes in straightjackets, but there's also a *Wizard of Oz* reference in the first song. This record is simultaneously dirge-y and spastic. Spurts of noise give way to bass grooves punctuated by weirdly timed drumbeats. I don't think I've ever heard anything quite like it. —MP Johnson (Insides Music, insidesmusic.com)

SHAPE BREAKER / FUCK MOUNTAIN: Split: 7"

Two post-punk jammers with traces of goth and hardcore. Philadelphia's Shapebreaker cover the A-side with "Spellbound" while Dublin's Fuck Mountain defend the rear with "Idle Hands." Both songs are equipped with simple riffs, intense solos, and delayed vocals. Listening to this makes me want to break some glassware and kick a door down, preferably at the same time. —Alanna Why (Gary, garyrecords.com, garyrcrds@gmail.com)

SHATTERED FAITH: Mirrors Reflection: 7"

This is the second 7" by a band formed in 1978, featuring a guitarist of U.S. Bombs. Easily identifiable as Orange Country by sound alone: melodic vocals, driving drums, classic

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guitar tone. My only complaint is that this one goes by too fast. —Michael T. Fournier (Hostage)

SHIN 2 SHIN: Self-titled: LP

Shin 2 Shin is essentially Aaron Melnick's (of Integrity fame) four-years-in-the-making solo project, featuring his incredibly distinct approach to metallic hardcore accompanied by different vocalists. It's impossible not to compare any of Melnick's output to his time in Integrity, as his style and tone are so uniquely his own, and such is the case here. The songs are terrific, the performances classic Melnick, but I'm left to wonder how much better this would be with Dwid up front. Still though, killer stuff. —Dave Williams (A389)

SHITTY WEEKEND: *Shit Week*: LP

Well it's safe to say this is *not* a shitty LP. Shitty Weekend features Andrew Link from The Taxpayers and members of grindcore band Transient. Beats be bouncy, guitars are surfy and distorted, and songs are fast and thrashy at times, to straight folk, bop-pop, and '80s punk. Definitely heavily influenced by The Taxpayers but there were hints of Bananas and Flaming Lips. May actually cure a shit week; I mean, as long as it's playing. Flip! —Camylle Reynolds (Secret Pennies)

SHORT DAYS: Self-titled: Cassette

I love hardcore as much as the next guy, but what I love more is when hardcore

bands abandon convention and let their songs breathe a little bit. Short Days, a French band, bashes away with the best of 'em, but really hit their stride when they abandon the genre conventions of a snare hit and a guitar chug sixteen times a second and let their music breathe a little, as on "Hallelujah Acres" and "I'm Boring (Again)." It's on these songs that the singer's vocals really shine, hitting the same gruff-but-melodic points as Kevin Seconds, say, or the singer from Slap Of Reality (remember them?). —Michael T. Fournier (Passion On Plastic)

SIGNALS MIDWEST:

Light on the Lake: LP

Signals Midwest is one of those bands I'd heard plenty about in various circles for the past few years but had never gotten around to actually checking out. There's a lot about this that I dig. The little American Football-esque lead flourishes, the often Bob Nanna-esque vocal delivery, the general late-'90s Midwest emo worship... but there's something about the sum of the parts that doesn't sit right with me. I think perhaps it's just a bit too slick for my liking. Part of the charm of the '90s emo era was its rough-around-the-edges-ness that kept it rooted in the punk / hardcore scene of the time (which was likewise quite prone to melodrama), but when delivered via modern machines it seems to lose much of the scrappy urgency that had me in sweater vests for a good two years. —Dave Williams (Tiny Engines, tinyengines.limitedrun.com)

SKEPTICS: *Black, Lonely & Blue*: LP

French garage with reverby male vocals augmented by reverby female backing vocals, garnished with the occasional hunk of fuzz over the top. FEEL THE SNARL OF THE RELENTLESS TAMBOURINE! *Pebbles* for breakfast, now and forever! This doesn't really reinvent the genre or anything, but this is a genre that does not unduly esteem self-reinvention. BEST SONG: "Too Much to Bear." BEST SONG TITLE: "Black, Lonely & Blue." FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: Sadly, "Everything I Do Is Wrong" is not a cover of the old Me & Them gem, but, on the bright side, "Sweet Mary" is not the Steve Miller song of similar nomenclature, either. —Rev. Nørð (Groovie, groovierecords.com)

SLAVESTATE 641A:

Masochist: Cassette

This is grating, droning noise grind. Think: Shellac guitar tone and Bastard Noise textures, yet without either band's fury or inventiveness. Nothing about this tape is accessible, but somehow wholly predictable. (For a six-and-a-half minute song, "Screwdriver" is numbingly repetitive.) All atmosphere, no substance. A slow motion mindfuck. The liner notes are pretentious to boot: "Thank you to those who served as sacrifices. Thank you for the touch of entropy on your body." The title is fitting, because I can't recommend this tape to anyone except to those who welcome pain. —Sean Arenas (Laugh Now, laughnowrecords.com)

SNEAKY PINKS, THE:

"I'm Punk" b/w "Puke Pudding": 7" EP

I couldn't tell whether "I'm Punk" is facetious mimicry or a degenerate declaration, but then I realized that I'm totally over thinking this. I mean, these dudes put their first record out on Bubbledumb, which actually kinda nicely sums up the sounds contained herein. Snotty, lo-fi Ramones worship for all the glue sniffers. Once I decided to stop thinking and just listen, the track slayed. The backside is even less together than the front, like it was demo fuckery, yet it still sounds like it coulda been on *Recess's Hot Curly Weenie 2*, which is bar-none my favorite sampler comp ever. Fun times. The dude from Nobunny constitutes half this here group, should things like that be of concern to you. —Vincent (Almost Ready)

SONIC DAZE: *First Coming*: CDEP

Italian four-piece that has been around since 2010. This is the second band from Italy I have written about in this batch. I'm getting hungry for some pasta! But back to the music. Four on the floor garage rock is the soup du jour. You know the drill. Well played. I just wish they had coordinated their inside cover picture a bit more. Either all band members wear shades, or in this case—fake it and have the other members wear fake eyeglasses. Without unity, all we have is chaos! —Sean Koenenick (Self-released, sonicdaze@libero.it)



SPACE WOLVES:**III, IV, The First Year: Cassette**

The First Year is a collection of all four previously released cassettes by Buffalo's Space Wolves, including *III* and *IV*, so don't mind if I do kill three birds here. The track listing looks and reads like Descendents' *Somery* album replete with twenty-five songs about girls, ridiculously short songs, and short songs about girls. Although I'm positive that Space Wolves are fans of Milo and co., their sound is more comparable to low-fi garage and power pop than melodic punk rock. The vocalist at times sounds an awful lot like Morrissey, although I'm sure he doesn't take himself nearly as seriously as the old suede head. The key to compiling four separate releases onto one cassette—and not making it an endurance test to listen to—is to keep the songs incredibly catchy. Space Wolves certainly hold up their end of that deal. Enough with these tapes, let's get some vinyl pressed fellas! —Juan Espinosa (UT, space-wolves.bandcamp.com)

SPITTING IMAGE: Love on a Terror: 7"

I'll start off with my only criticism of this record, the artwork. I don't get it. But do not let the cover fool you. Imagine if Nation Of Ulysses were from the desert and you'll have an idea about Spitting Image's sound. They have a very Northwestern post-punk sound mixed with spacey desert rock on this record. These Reno boys have been playing for a while now and getting better and better by the release. "Love

on a Terror" is a mid-paced, post-punk song with a lot of angst that crawls to a near six-minute end. "We Begin" is a bit more intense and spacey sounding. I saw these guys play last year and was super impressed by their live intensity. Spitting Image is doing punk rock right and I, for one, can't wait for the full length. Buy this record. —Ryan Nichols (NGTV SPC)

SPOKENEST:**Destroy, Gone, Listen, Lose: Cassette**

Spokenest demands you to get off your ass. Don't become a blob, a gelatinous mass that consumes day in, day out. Take a walk. Get your hands dirty. Notice your neighbors. Make or support something of value, a value that isn't monetary. Dollar signs won't give you perspective. Spokenest demands accountability: "Is your voice, your voice?" Sincerity isn't a tempo or a slippery heartsick crooner with pomade-greased hair and an acoustic guitar, but the ability to bypass bullshit. With the smokescreen cleared, music is no longer expected to be pretty, pristine, but simply honest. Honesty is more valuable and rarer than any precious metal. Spokenest demands transparency. There's nothing perfect about this four-song cassette, but I wouldn't have it any other way. I don't trust anything too slick or too choreographed. The chords are serrated, the drums wallop, and one voice barks while the other belts pure melody—it's a noise that's damn near impossible to co-opt. This two-piece

is both a literal marriage and a Tesla coil. They spark those around them and lovingly supercharge punk culture with numerous contributions: music, art, and zines. "What are you gonna do?" they shout. There's no right answer, but a million wrong ones; I plan to keep listening and, in due time, pass the tape along. —Sean Arenas (Self-released, spokenest.bandcamp.com)

SPRUCE BRINGSTEEN: Game On!: 10"

Wow. Do you hate fun? 'Cause, apparently, Too Many Daves has recorded a Mean Jeans tribute 10"! If you can put your beer down long enough and you're not too drunk to use a computer, you should probably order this right now. Spruce wrote a song about "B.U.D.L.I.G.H.T. Lime" for crapes sake! (Warning: the grainy photo covers are the only poor piece of this release. Don't you guys know any cartoonists/artists?) Seriously though...brilliant name, brilliant record. Unless you hate fun. —Matt Seward (Do What?)

STIFF LITTLE FINGERS:**No Going Back: LP/CD**

Stiff Little Fingers has been my constant musical companion for over thirty years and the band's first album in over a decade has left me devouring the record for days now. It really is an outstanding release and for anyone who has kept in touch with the last five albums released since the band reformed, this one knocks spots off all of them—it's also better than *Now*

Then, the final album before the band split in 1982. It's great to hear Jake Burns' voice and distinctive guitar flourishes on these new songs whilst Ali McMordie still knows how to knock out killer bass lines to maintain a song's momentum. The lyrical content is a mix of socio-political and personal themes, with Burns showing that he still has the knack for songwriting, resulting in a collection of highly memorable and catchy tunes. The band recorded and produced this record using funds obtained via a PledgeMusic campaign, having been disenchanted with discussions with various labels, and this approach has worked out well for the band. Even as an unabashed fan of the band, I hadn't expected something as good as this. I'm tempted to give it album of the year status already. —Rich Cocksedge (Rigid Digits, slf.com)

STRANGE ATTRACTOR:**Back to the Cruel World: LP**

Am I fucking nuts or does this band have something to do with the criminally underrated band the Statues? I have no idea, but how many punk rock aliens live in Sudbury Ontario? I've always said the best music comes from places that are hostile and inaccessible; no peers to impress, no chicks to pick up on, allowing musical freaks to be free to go wild uninhibited. Case in point this band... or person, or group of extra terrestrials, this is mind-blowing freak punk. Taking the best aspects of hyper obscure Killed By Death punk from Canada like the Red Squares, Proles,

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Hot Nasties, and other no-marks who have had record tweakers freaking out for decades. This slab isn't just some throwback; those names were just starting point. If you are new to the game, think Ty Segall or some hip shit mixed with the Angry Samoans or some other loose ne'rdo well punk band full of fuck ups. I'd love to be wide eyed and sixteen again thinking every cookie cutter piece of shit was the second coming, unfortunately a lot of new shit bores me to tears. This record blew my ears clean off my bald head. You need a blueprint or a fucking roadmap how to make dense, strange, interesting, elusive punk? Look no further. Top ten shit. Bet it's sold out. —Tim Brooks (FDH, fdhmusic.com)

SUBSETS: *Ape Facin': 7"*

The title track opens with a tense, ominous riff. The menacing atmosphere hangs heavy over the rest of the EP, which takes most of its cues from brooding '70s and '80s punk like Agent Orange and T.S.O.L. It might be the gloomy reverb or the singer's gruff growling, but something about this Cincinnati band is also giving off a heavy U.K. vibe, reminiscent of Oi Polloi's darker moments. "I Don't Wanna Be Here" is poppier but somehow no more upbeat, landing somewhere between The Ramones and crippling depression. I want the band to know that it literally started raining outside when I put this record on. —Indiana Laub (Granado, granadorecords.blogspot.com)

SULTAN BATHERY: *Self-titled: CD*

First of all, if there were awards for the best cover art, this band would win all the trophies. It also does a very important job: it gives you a good clue about what the music might sound like. Sometimes cover art is misleading (or doesn't give you a lot to go on), but this is loud and clear about being some trippy, druggy rock. On garage fuzz, this album delivers. The vocals remind me of early Black Sabbath. I think that most of these songs would be a good soundtrack to a movie set in late-'60s England about a ragtag group of long-haired screw-ups who are plotting to rob a bank. —Bianca (Slovenly)

SUN SICK: *Self-titled: LP*

Artwork is important to me when I pick up a record; it's the first thing you see. I feel sorry for those downloaders out there who miss out on this part of the experience. With that being said, I really liked the artwork on this record. It just looks fun and, sure enough, it was an accurate nod to the direction of the sound of this record. Sun Sick play beach punk that reminds me of The Hives a little bit. These guys are from France, so I image bathing suits are optional. All the songs are in English, which is fine, but I can't help but wish they were sung in French to set these guys further apart from everyone else. They have a spazzy sound full of guitars covered in reverb, bratty vocals, and plenty of tambourines. Fans of The Tijuana Panthers would like these guys. Overall, this is a fun record. —Ryan Nichols (Lollipop/Crapoulet)

SUNNYSIDE:

Welcome to San Diego: CD

Listening to Sunnyside's debut full length gave me cause to consider a whole multitude of bands that I was reminded of across the fourteen tracks. The most obvious is the Social Distortion-like swagger that Sunnyside has, which, in places, is blended in with an early Stiff Little Fingers quality as well as having a punch-drunk looseness I associate with Dillinger Four. Vocally, it's a mixed bag, too. At times I think I'm hearing Mike Ness, others Blake Schwarzenbach (Jawbreaker) and, incongruously, even Butch Klotz of 30 Foot Fall. Despite the name checking above, this record easily manages to stand alone as its own beast with a number of songs having the ability to sound like old favorites after just a handful of plays. This is very good stuff indeed. —Rich Cocksedge (A.D.D.)

SUPERSUCKERS: *Get the Hell: CD*

Right off the bat, I must say that I have never been especially fond of this band, even at the height of buying multiple records from bands like Candy Snatchers, Electric Frankenstein, and The Humpers. My standard line in the '90s was that I had never heard of a more aptly named band and though I have stepped back from that stance, I have still never really been able to get into the Supersuckers. Sure, the country record was alright and that song "On the Couch" was awesome, but it was awesome because it didn't sound like the

other stuff by this band. However, after a decade-plus living in Seattle, I came to really respect this band for sticking to their guns and being very cool in regard to helping out with benefit gigs and other stuff around town. Just like Death Cab For Cutie and Pearl Jam, I never warmed to the music but have come to respect the bands and the way they conduct themselves. In the case of the Supersuckers in particular, I also had to admit that former guitarist Ron "Rontrose" Heathman is a kickass guitar player once he joined the Hangmen and really took that already great band up a notch. Having said all that, listening to this record makes me realize that the Supersuckers have turned into a good band, if still not really my thing. Laying off the gas a little for a more mid tempo sound really makes a difference, just like it did for the Hellacopters when they finally put out their classic album *Rock N Roll Is Dead* right before breaking up. I am hearing cops from Mudhoney and even what seems to be a Descendents influence on "Something about You." Nearly thirty years on, this band has been doing their thing nonstop. They are better now than they have ever been; there's a lot to be said for that. —Mike Frame (Acetate)

SWEARIN': *Surfing Strange: LP*

My expectations were too high for this record. Swearin's self-titled LP floored me. It filled the void after P.S. Eliot's break-up and provided so many memorable, angst-riddled anthems. Sadly, *Surfing Strange* left me mostly



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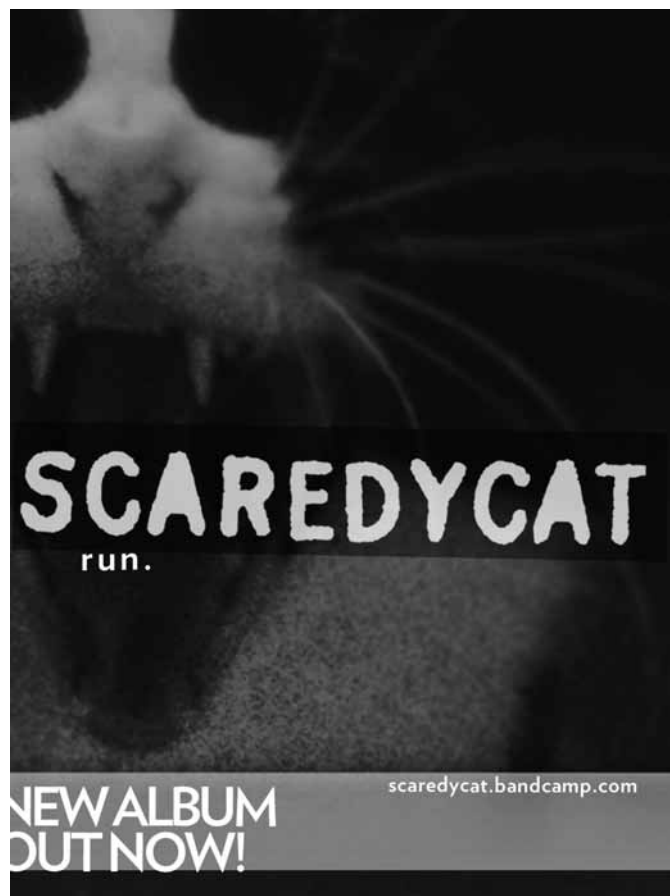


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bored. The two opening tracks ("Dust in the Gold Sack" and "Watered Down") are both robust and understated; the perfect songs to draw you right in. Then comes the overly long, Breeder's homage "Mermaid"—at that point, Swearin' spit me right out. What follows are a series of lazy, fatigued ballads and derivative tunes. "Echo Locate" and "Unwanted Place" are exceptions, but they rely too heavily on the Stephen Malkmus School of '90s Progressions. Ultimately, the major issue is that the record has several dry spells, and the strong songs are bookended by underwhelming, rail-thin tunes. This would have been an incredible EP rather than a full-length. Bummer. —Sean Arenas (Salinas)

TAXPAYERS, THE: *To Risk So Much for One Damn Meal*: LP

On the surface, The Taxpayers are derivative of folk punk which is synonymous with shrill, belting vocals, confessional lyrics, and open chords instead of those power ones, but they're actually more akin to authentic folk: class discontent, lyrical, acerbic, humble musicianship, jaunty, and weary. Although the LP is a maelstrom of disappointment and deep contemplation—this isn't the sound of apathy. Case in point: "Everybody Just Stood There" functions poignantly as a companion to Andrew Jackson Jihad's "Guilt: The Song." Both are tales of numb observers to public tragedies. Both narrators are remorseful. Yet, this isn't the sound of complacency, either. If we lent a hand, if we didn't just stand there

and casually watch suffering, then we might be just an inch closer to feeling guilt free. This is the sound of direct action, direct human contact. Modern life has afforded us the opportunity to play music on a spinning petroleum-based plastic disc, but simultaneously left us floating listlessly, frothing for purpose. The Taxpayers provide a temporary remedy: distilled storytelling. Each song resonates like a chapter in a larger narrative. You can choose to follow the threads, or nod your head to the snappy folk orchestra (banjo, piano, accordion, saxophone). Regardless of your choice, there is no incorrect means of ingestion as all leave an indelible impression. Note: "Some Kind of Disaster Relief" is a dead ringer for the *Big Time* version of Tom Waits' "Telephone Call from Istanbul." That's a damn good thing. —Sean Arenas (Plan-it X, plan-it-x.com)

TEAM UGLY: *Screaming in Tongues: Cassette*

Captivating avant-garde post-rock from Auckland. They don't exactly sound like The Clean or Toy Love, but I can't help but toss those names in the hat. Not merely because of proximity, of course. There's a strong Flying Nun influence on these tracks, given the general uniqueness to them. Definitely worth keeping your tape deck for a few listens. —Steve Adamyk (Melted Ice Cream, meltedicecream.co.nz)

TERMINUS: *Going Nowhere Fast*: CD
Another long-forgotten album gets the Boss Tuneage Retro treatment. This

time it's the turn of the mildly eclectic Terminus and an album originally released in 1990 on the Words Of Warning label. I remember hearing the band back in the day and am still taken aback at how it managed to bring in so many influences into its music, ranging from folk to punk and metal to anarcho punk. As the album was recorded over a period of time, the quality varies a bit across the fourteen songs but that doesn't diminish the impact the band made in standing up and fighting against the inequities of the world—the fact that many of the lyrics are still relevant today is a scathing indictment of the lack of progress made by humanity in twenty-four years. The mix of gothic, low tone vocals ties in nicely with the more metallic guitar work; this is one of the reasons why Terminus stood apart from a lot of the bands I listened to at the time. This has aged well and is one of the best of the retro series releases. —Rich Cocksedge (Boss Tuneage, boss-tuneage.com)

THREE MAN CANNON / LEE COREY OSWALD: *Split*: LP

The defeated-looking old lady adorning the cover of this record didn't give me any insight as to what these bands were going to sound like. Three Man Cannon have a nostalgic indie rock sound. They took me back to the early days when all these now famous bands belonged to us and not the world. The recording has a warm home recording sound to it. Lee Corey Oswald really took me back to the '90s and reminded me of bands like

Superchunk and Pavement. Both of these bands complement each other really well. If you miss the days of discovering underground indie bands with your weirdo high school friends, then pick this record up. A lot of band names come to mind when listening to this split, but, more importantly, it's the time that this record reminds me of: being young, having your whole life ahead of you, and not realizing it. This split is a perfect blend of indie rock, pop, and emo. Great record overall. —Ryan Nichols (Stereophonodon, stereophonodon@gmail.com /Black With Sap, blackwithsap.limitedrun.com)

TIM TIMEBOMB: *High Noon in a Dark Blue Sea*: CD

Culling the quality material from the considerable chaff of Tim Armstrong's recent "a song a day for a year" project, *High Noon in a Dark Blue Sea* is actually a decent grouping of a dozen songs. The dude is clearly a polarizing figure, and quite justifiably, but if we're just looking at things from a purely musical perspective, it's clear that he can still pen a decent punk song every once in a while. Contains a handful of originals (which are definitely the stronger work here) and some covers by Toy Dolls, Bad Religion, Psychotic Pineapple, and The Jam. Again, not a jaw dropper by any measure, but there are some good songs here. —Keith Rosson (Pirates Press)

TODAY'S HITS: *Sex Boys*: 7"
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sounding tunes, very much in a Burger Records or HoZac kind of style. This band is better than most these days—though I have to say I have had more than my fill of this reverb-drenched, lo-fi type of stuff. Fans of Shannon And The Clams and King Khan will find a whole lot to like here. —Mike Frame (Randy, randyreecs@gmail.com)

TOHTORI KOIRA: *Tammelan Pojat: 7"*

I'll admit that I found the cover art on this record to be a little cheesy so I wasn't in a hurry to hear this record. But once I put it on, I was surprised. The first thing that surprised me was that it was in Finnish so I understood nothing. Next I found that these guys play good old punk rock. They sound like a Fat Records band inspired by all the good old school punk like Sham 69, Blitz, etc. Sometimes I like that you can't understand foreign bands lyrics. You have to hear the music and just make up your own words. This record is limited to three hundred. —Ryan Nichols (Blast Of Silence, info@blastofsilence.org)

TOP SHELF LICKERS: *Heart Beats Brain: 12" EP*

Top Shelf Lickers deliver overproduced, wish-they-were-popular, cookie cutter, third wave Alkaline Trio music (I will not call this punk). Six songs that felt like twenty from their generic tediousness. With Chicago's punk pedigree, the city probably wishes TSL would move out. In a review box containing possibly the worst/most ridiculous/most misleading

album art, this took the cake. Took looking at the spine to figure out the name of the band. If you're going to get picked up by Warner Bros, hire an ad exec or graphic designer to make your cover art choices for you. Your eleven-year-old sibling likes Top Shelf Lickers because you haven't taught them better. 'Nuff said. —Matt Seward (PickMeUp!, topshelflickers.com)

TOXICS, THE: *Self-titled: Cassette*

Four-song cassette from Finnish garage rockers The Toxics. No bassist, but there are two guitarists: one that plays "baritone" while the other handles "fuzz." The frantic energy and howling of "Fix Me" reminded me of Canadian weirdo Strange Attractor, while closer "Most Wanted" is just slow enough to bring Mudhoney to mind. Considering the format and the fact that the only thing written in the liner notes is "Ahead the dim blur of an alien land," I don't have a clue as to what any of the lyrics are, proving that this release is, quite literally, too punk for words. —Alanna Why (Mono Mono)

TRAMPOLINE TEAM: *Velveteen Dream: 7"*

An unassuming xeroxed cover belies the charm of Trampoline Team's brand of distorted garage pop. *Velveteen Dream* is a blast of jangly guitars squealing with feedback and surfy buzz. The band's real strength is in the irresistibly catchy melodies, which the front woman belts out with effortless cool. "Rabbit Foot" and "I'm So

Popular" could have been lost Pangea tracks from a few summers ago. These four quick songs hit a nearly perfect balance, sweet with just the right amount of snarl. —Indiana Laub (Pelican Pow Wow)

TRANSIENT: *Self-titled: LP*

I pretty much loathe grindcore as a genre, and even I can see why people are freaking out over this band right now. A flawlessly executed, woefully punishing, seizure-inducing batch of sixteen songs on a 12" 45, with the requisite doom-laden lyrics that are actually quite well-written, dense with creepy imagery and non-dorky Greek references. The record label's pretty indicative: if you're into Six Weeks stuff, you're in for a treat. This album will give you severe heart palpitations right before it peels your skull like a little bezitted tangerine. I can hardly even form thoughts when listening to this thing. —Keith Rosson (Six Weeks)

TROPICAL DRIPPS: *Cool Dude: Cassette*

Melancholy weirdo surf from Ottawa, Canada, a city better known for its wild winters than its wild waves. With Dick Dale leads and '60s drum beats, Tropical Dripps' second release includes back-up vocals from bassist Kurty Coastline for the first time, drawing a strong resemblance to James Leroy from fellow Canadian garage worshippers The Ketamines. "Head Wound" clocks in at less than ninety seconds, while closer "We Are All Going Away" gets your hips swaying

no matter how much your mind may protest. The trio's last release had three songs; this one has five. Hopefully the next one will have more than seven. —Alanna Why (Bruised Tongue)

TRUE BELIEVERS: *Accept It!: 7" EP*

This here record is a reissue of Mike Rep and Tommy Jay (Mike Rep And The Quotas/Ego Summit) 7" from 1980, and first in Hozac's Ohio Underground Series, which makes me hope for the early Vertical Slit 7"s. Anyhow, the songs are pretty cool U.S. DIY, but that shouldn't be too surprising given its birthplace is a hotbed for weird and wonderful. "Accept It" sounds like it was informed by the Stooges and a hearty portion of art rock. The first on the flip follows a similar trajectory, but gets a bit more artful, and then the record closes out with a real weird one about being locked in a meat freezer. Another fine record from Columbus, Ohio. —Vincent (Hozac)

UNDECIDED: *Complications: EP*

The past is being plumbed for all it's worth, and it's turning up some stuff that was never "all that" even when it was new. Such is the case with Undecided. These songs were recorded between 1986 and 1988, and I believe the band was from the DC area. You can hear traces of the regional influences in their sound, like some of drumming in "I Can't Stand Another Day" reminds me a tad of the Bad Brains, and "Tomorrow" has that tuneful quality that late '80s Dischord bands possessed. But then

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there are songs that sound like they came from a Santa Cruz skateboard video (not exactly a compliment), like the last two songs, "Don't Look Back" and "Caught in the Game." The vocals are a little annoying with the nasally delivery and biting on HR's style. This is demo quality-type songs that, if the band had stuck it out, should have been looked at as a building block, on what to improve, and what to keep. —M.Avrq (Eye 95)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *A Brilliant Escape: CD*

I like to think I'm kind of a hip guy. Hippish. *Hipful*. On the cusp, at least somewhat, of the wacky shit the kids are into these days. Strange thing is I haven't even *heard* of a single band on this sampler, which is kind of impressive in and of itself, or a case of some PR/label guy just firing things out willy-nilly into the void. *A Brilliant Escape*, with its minimal packaging, brings back the dark days when label samplers were replacing thoughtful, well-constructed compilations. Saccharine pop and indie rock bands abound here. Skytone, Armstrong, Self Love, Dot Dash, and the Social Icons are just a few of the bands I've never heard of before. —Keith Rosson (Beautiful Music)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *Defend Hamilton... Eat Shit: EP*

Compilation of new bands from Hamilton, Ontario paying "ohmage to the underbelly" of the city they call

home. Songs about murderers like Jon Rallo, Loujack Cafe, Evelyn Dick, even more murder, and corruption. The bands on here are on the thrashy hardcore side of things, with some "noizecore" bands popping up here and there. Standouts for me were Laid To Rest with "Evelyn Dick the Torso Killer" and Pick Your Side's "Janice D Is Dead." —M.Avrq (Schizophrenic)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *Drop the Needle: Boston Punk Anthology: CD*

The Stilphen brothers (Chuck and Glen) dig through the basement and come with some hidden gems here. Smegma and The Nunz dates back to the early '80s. Sadly, original vocalist Alec Steere passed away in 1999. There is also the original version of Gang Green's "Let's Drink Some Beer," from 1985. Not radically different from the song I remember, but still cool to have in the collection. Scratch and Mallet Head are more in the metal arena, but they still bring it. I love the inside cover picture. Classic! —Sean Koepenick (Trev, trevrec.com)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *Guided By Voices Tribute: 7"*

Okay, confession time: when I eat spicy foods, I lose hearing in my right ear. No, no, that's not right. Oh, here it is: to my knowledge, I have *never* listened to Guided By Voices. Not once. I've probably surreptitiously heard them at one point or another, but not so I remember them. So I have no idea how faithful or jaw-droppingly creative

these covers are. Four bands: Screaming Females, Waxahatchee, Upset, and Swearin'. The record's over quite quickly, the vinyl's the color of cherry-flavored Chapstick, and if nothing else, I'm even further convinced that the woman from Waxahatchee could sing a recipe for beet borscht and I'd still be into it. —Keith Rosson (Salinas)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *Maximum Rocknroll Presents Sound the Alarms: 2 x LP*

Another international comp from this fanzine mainstay, this time a double-disc affair featuring thirty-two bands repping fourteen countries, courtesy of Silla Electrica, Synthetic ID, Anti You, Lotus Fucker, Cülo, Kuudes Silma, Nuclear Spring, Hondartzako Hondakinak, and a buncha others. As can be expected given the mag's musical tastes, this slants heavily towards the hardcore end of the rainbow, yet they keep things from degenerating into a thrashy blur both by collecting a pretty solid selection of tunes and having the foresight to toss in enough bands working in lower gears to break up any potential monotony. Given the dearth of any true scene comps, and the even fewer worth listening to with any regularity, this is a nice, timely addition to the platform. —Jimmy Alvarado (Maximum Rocknroll)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *Wolf Party: CD*

Killer surf/garage/weirdo compilation from New Zealand featuring nobody you've heard of slaying everybody you

already know. Knife Fight's "Woof Woof Woof" and The Chandeliers' "Diamondo" are the real holy shit goddamn moments (also: the singer from Mr. Slackjaw sounds a lot like Mark Sandman), but there's so much to take in here, all gnarly and deranged and goofy and cool. There are little stop-offs into U.S. Girls and maybe fake, dumb cold wave territory (Full Fucking Moon's "Litany of the Oceans, Pt. 1" and Golden Axe's "Dognapped," respectively), but mostly it's psych and rock'n'roll and dirty side roads and head trips. The bands know their history, and they also care enough to fuck with tradition. Very pumped to see King Loser mentioned in the liner notes, too. They could be the spiritual parents of this garage crew, kind of? Would love to tour New Zealand and hang at all the Kiwi dives with all these bands. —Matt Werts (Voodoo Rhythm)

VEXX, THE: *Self-titled: 12" EP*

I am thankful that people are able to use hardcore as an inspiration for making music that isn't necessarily hardcore. The Vexx are definitely a hardcore punk band, but they aren't confined by the label. X's Americana accent; The Vexx's clenched fist intensity. The track "Strength" is one of the most captivating tracks I've heard all year. I'm also thankful for the unholy combination of Maryjane's vocals and Mike's guitar playing. The balance of sounding totally unhinged and totally in control takes these songs to a level many strive for, but rarely reach.

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Like fellow Olympians, Hysterics, I've heard this band's live shows are absolutely devastating, so check 'em out if you get the chance. I know I will be. —Daryl (Grazer, grazerrecords.bigcartel.com)

WE LIVE IN TRENCHES: *Life Crisis*: LP

We Live In Trenches could well be the bastard offspring following a messy tryst involving The Rollins Band, Big Black, and Dead And Gone, such is the deep-rooted intensity that permeates each and every track on the band's second album. The record pulsates with a nihilistic thunder, topped off with a bear-like growl exuding a rib-crushing threat which keeps me in a state of high alert throughout. The songs benefit from being well structured and, therefore, do not fall into the trap of getting lost in a repetitiveness that would dull its impact. Surprisingly, I quite enjoy listening to this in a relaxing bath! —Rich Cocksedge (La Familia, stachel@lafamiliareleases.com, lafamiliareleases.com / Farsot, info@farsotfarsot.com)

WILD EMOTIONS: *"Hey Everybody" b/w "Wild Emotions": 7"*

Wild Emotions are an all-girl band with a lo-fi, keyboard-punk sound. The song on the A-side, "Hey Everybody," would be a perfect track to spin at a Halloween party. It's a fun, simple song you could easily pogo to in your ironic costume. The B-side song is called, well, "Wild Emotions." This song is a bit more chaotic than the other. The vocals are

blurry and it has a drunk-speed tempo. All in all, this is a fun little party record. —Ryan Nichols (Blahhll!)

WONDERFUL THING:

Intimate Dream: CD

With cheesy cover art and cheesier guitar solos, I initially classified this one as simple yet harmless dadcore. Then I got to a track called "Space Girl": "Now it's time to take a taste / Of the slags from outer space." Seconds later, a middle-aged man crooned off-key: "I don't care if you're a dyke, girl." What the hell?! Then, he goes on to sing about how this girl should "get off of her knees" because he doesn't want to "taste her disease." Every other song is just about an old man longing for love. Where did this patriarchal, heteronormative crap come from? I knew it was shit the moment I looked at it, but I didn't know it was sexist shit too. This makes me mad and sad at the same time. Ugh. —Alanna Why (Self-released)

WORRIERS: *Cruel Optimist*: 8-song LP

"Worriers" and "warriors" are homophones. When I say 'em out loud, they sound similar. On record, Lauren Denitzio's exploration of her vulnerabilities is what makes her songs so strong, what makes the Worriers so compelling. She's got a wonderful voice and it runs the gamut on this record from exuberant and strident, to romantic, to questioning, to angry, to resolute. That's a broad range for a voice to convey. It shows the complexity of not merely

bumping through life, but living it. As a collection of songs, there's a sea change afoot, as happens with age and an inspected life. Some people around Lauren are giving up and giving in. Their ideals are being swapped like fashion accessories of conspicuous consumption. Instead of flat-out blame, Lauren digs deeper into herself. At the end, we must find ourselves. We are our own captains. We are our own ship. Take care of yourself. That's not a bad headspace for a record to put the careful listener into. It's, at its essence, a thoughtful pop punk record. Also features Rachel of Bridge And Tunnel, Mikey "Million Bands" Yannich, and Tim Burke! of The Measure [SA]. Beautiful, emotionally smart music. —Todd Taylor (Don Giovanni)

YES MISTRESS!: *Drunk Again*: 7"

Generic, obnoxious, and annoying. Stereotypical "hard" rock mixed with punk tempo changes. Lyrical gems such as, "You want motivation but there's none to be had / Go outside and ask some money from dad" and "Layin' in bed like a girl on her rag." Rag? What are you, twelve? Sadly, the members of Yes Mistress! are actually old enough to know (and do) better. Avoid. —Alanna Why (Ken Rock, ken-rock.com, kensplastic@hotmail.com)

YOUNG AND IN THE WAY / WITHDRAWAL: *Split*: 7"

Young And In The Way does the heavily black metal-infused hardcore thing better than anyone else, and it's

no surprise that Deathwish snatched YAITW up for its upcoming LP. Just blazing, venomous, dissonant-yet-melodic black metal-core that reminds me of both Catharsis and Spread The Disease at times. Withdrawal delivers more straightforward Ringworm/Integrity-influenced hardcore that isn't quite as refreshing or impressive as YAITW's side, but is still furious, pummeling, and well executed enough to keep me psyched throughout. Great split. —Dave Williams (A389)

ZATOPEKS: *About Bloody Time*: CD

Zatopeks surprised me. From the cover art and the band name, I expected their sound to be as moody as the cigarette-smoking, coffee-drinking woman on the back cover. Instead, I was greeted by a polished sound and meticulously crafted hooks that were just as well researched as the lyrics, which are dense with history—complete with footnote citations on the insert. "Mechanised" taught me more Russian references than any world history course in my five years in college. "Acetate," a duet that verges on sentimental without crossing the line into sappy, is a break from the momentum of the other songs, though I think I would have preferred it being a female solo. Their songs are content-rich but are catchy enough to be digested easily. —Ashley (Monster Zero / It's Alive)

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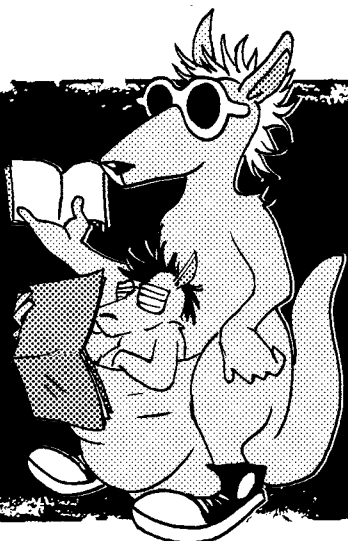
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Canada, L9C 3M2
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“One friend said
it made her feel
for the cops.”

—Dave Brainwreck
ACAB #2

ACAB #2, \$2 or trade, 5 ½” x 8 ½”, copied, 8 pgs.

Harsh and sparse. Pictures of cops (“bastards”) who were killed by civilians (“heroes”). Short bio of each cop and a short account of the killing and resulting prison sentence. No secret where the editor(s) stand on this one. One friend said it made her feel for the cops. Another friend said it reminded him of the fake Panther propaganda the CIA manufactured in the 1960s that was supposed to shock the public into disapproval of the BPP, and that it also reminded him of shock-zines from the power electronics scene. This is supposed to be divisive. I hate cops, but I don’t back the policy of having them indiscriminately rounded up and shot. These people do? —Dave Brainwreck (UT, PO Box 467, Amherst NY 14226)

BASIC PAPER AIRPLANE #7, \$3, 4 ¼” x 5 ½”,
copied w/ color cover, 32 pgs.

Cute, quick, typewritten zine interspersed with what looks to be nineteenth century ink illustrations of kids playing. A variety of topics are briefly tackled (“How We Met,” “Success,” “Grown Ups”), usually in a space of a paragraph. My biggest point of interest is that the guy lives in Portland and hits a post office in which he is regularly the only customer, to the point where he regularly bullshits with the postal workers. I’m clearly, *clearly* going to a different post office. —Keith Rosson (Joshua James Amberson, PO Box 42081, Portland, OR 97242)

BRUTALIST SHIMMY #1, £2.90, 5 ½” x 8 ½”, copied, 24 pgs.

A guy from The Briggs doing a zine that consists of various online pieces gathered together. Record reviews, a pretty impressive review / “taxonomy” of songs in which the Ramones are referenced, and a reader-submitted Q and A about what Joe considers punk or not, done very tongue in cheek. Layout’s reasonably snappy with plenty of graphics, though that font is dangerously close to Courier, if you ask me. Pretty fun. —Keith Rosson (J. Briggs, 23A Junction Rd., Oxford OX4 2NT, UK)

COUCHED #1, \$5 ppd., 5½” x 8½”, copied, 26 pgs.

An angsty photography and prose zine full of musings on failed relationships and music. Some elements are romantic (“Two Clever Things I Said to Redheads and One Clever Thing a Redhead Said to Me”) while others are a little squirm-inducing. Giving their definition of what love truly is, the author writes, “Love is a big, red button and you’re willing to shove old ladies to get to it. You’re willing to step over babies that have fallen onto the ground to reach it and push it.” All in all, the effort is there. But baby smushing? I’m a little bit scared. —Alanna Why (Fair Dig Press, fairdig.com)

DREAMS OF DONUTS #19, \$?, 5 ½” x 8 ½”, copied, 54 pgs.

Picked this baby up and I just couldn’t put it down until the very end, and even then I flipped back through to gaze at all the lovely, bizarre, and truly awesome pictures. I know Heather Wreckage as an incredible artist. I’ve been lucky enough to have her design a couple of show flyers for us in the past, but my mind was truly blown by her funny, clever, and insightful little tidbit stories in this version of *Dreams of*

Donuts. From one female punk to another, it really spoke to me on so many levels. Not to pigeon hole her zine to just feminist punk (would that really be so bad?!) but it’s her own personal narrative that she speaks, from tongue-in-cheek to brutally honest. Highlights include weird escapades to rural punk shows, simple how-to’s in zine making, bad punk haircuts (are you an offender?), the depths of despair in dating, into a thoughtful discourse on self-awareness, feminism, and gender politics surrounding punk shows (politics of the pit). This issue also has an incredible contribution from Robert Eggplant on the history of 510-BAD-SMUT. For those of you who don’t what that is, it’s a phone number in the Bay Area that you can call for free to find out local DIY and independent happenings daily since 1996 and it’s still around! Each page is jammed packed with detailed images, both hilarious and, at times, deeply disturbing. YOU’VE GOT TO GET THIS! —Camylle Reynolds (Heather Wreckage, Dreams of Donuts, 3913 Boyle Ct., Sacramento, CA 95817, all4choice@hotmail.com, heatherwreckage.blogspot.com)

EXPLODING BUFFALO,

Free, 8 ½” x 5 ½”, copied, w/glossy cover, 37 pgs.

The cover of this issue said “Dreams” on it, which led me to hope that this zine would be all about the Fleetwood Mac song and exposing the bullshit they espouse about how thunder only happens when it’s raining. Don’t get me wrong: I like the song, but that’s some faulty meteorology. Unfortunately, there was no mention of Fleetwood Mac in this entire zine. Instead, what *is* in *Exploding Buffalo* is some poetry, some drawings, photos, and two fictional stories. The layout is great and much better than an average zine. The content was so-so. There was nothing that blew me away but none of it was bad, either. And all of it was based on the theme of dreams, so it was cool to see some consistency on a topic. If you’ve always been a fan of sleep and dreams, then I’d definitely suggest checking this out, otherwise you’d probably want to pass. —Kurt Morris (explodingbuffalo.com)

FINALE 95 #3, \$2 Can., \$3 U.S., \$4 Int’l, 3 ¼” x 5 ½”, copied, 26 pgs.

Subtitle of this zine, Bildungsroman, is described for the reader as a type of novel that comes from the German tradition and deals with the “formative years” of the main character (moral, emotion, psychological) and ending on a high note, with the silly follies of the protagonist behind them. It’s not a spoiler: *Finale 95* is a good read even if you think you know how it ends. Sections of the zine begin with “Prom,” move through graduation and summer, move through the seasons and the tribulations of entering a college environment, ending with “Winter.” As an old crone, it’s interesting for me to see a person full of youthful vigor going through many of the same trials (albeit, the author is much smarter than I was) of a collegiate environment. The writing was strong and the stories were engagingly told. —Bianca (Alanna Why 2190 Liska St. Ottawa, ON. K4A 4J8, Canada, yaraskavitch@gmail.com)

FREAK TENSION #15, \$4, 5” x 8 ½”, copied, 20 pgs.

Small vignettes consisting of slices of the author’s life and a few other odds and ends (reviews, interview, recipe, fiction). The writing is solid

but not super meaty. Zines like this are often written off as navel-gazing because the author's personal recollections don't resonate with other people. Constructing personal narratives *can* be self-involved and delusional, but toying around with garden-wall parameters and different angles to look at your life can also be instructive and illuminating—at worst, for only yourself; at best, for others too. This has the potential for both. A fine effort. —Dave Brainwreck (freaktensions@yahoo.com, MP Johnson, 4316 Upton Ave. S, Apt. 300, Minneapolis, MN 55410)

FYRE ENGINE \$4, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", copied, 9 pgs.

My favorite thing about drugs is talking about what it's like to do drugs. I myself haven't gone much farther than inhaling reefer a few times in high school, though I have always appreciated those who have taken that extra step and embraced the magic of psychedelics. *Fyre Engine* is a short and sweet zine that can be summed up in three letters: DMT. This is a mostly objective account of this naturally occurring alkaloid

through direct "This is my life" tales (though there are a couple interludes of that nature), the reader learns about the author mostly through top ten lists ("Top Ten Filipino Superstitions," "Top Ten Things I'm Surprised I Actually Like"), her choice of the City of the Month (She makes a good case for the awesomeness of Cerritos), and random information about Russian puppies as Communist martyrs and her personal ghost encounters. By the time you're at the last page, it all comes at you like you've just met the most interesting person at a party and you're both a little drunk and the other person just keeps having awesome things to say. This almost never happens in real life; a little more often, it happens in zines. —Bianca (Three Amigos Press!, zibazehdar@gmail.com)

MAXIMUM TREMOLO #1, \$2 ppd., 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", copied, 16 pgs.

Since there's a cartoon rat riding a surfboard on the cover, you don't even have to read this to know that it's awesome. With the tagline "Making surf a fucking threat again," this fanzine passionately covers

"[It's] like you've just met the most interesting person at a party.... This almost never happens in real life; a little more often, it happens in zines."

—Bianca | LUNA IN TUNA #7

from its scientific breakdown, where it's appeared in history, and how it has affected our popular culture. My favorite excerpts describe in minor detail, what the fuck this shit does to you and what the outcomes are when done correctly. Even though this isn't rocket surgery you can't argue with statistics, and the chances that someone will take drugs and screw up can be high if they are not properly informed. This zine very positively condones the use of one kind of drug. The last page is a step-by-step how-to safely and effectively use DMT. —Simon Sotelo (Fyre Engine, PO Box 661441, LA, CA 90066)

HARD FIFTY FARM, THE #2, \$4.50, 5" x 8 1/2", printed, 36 pgs.

Jessie Dukes is a naturally talented writer whose style matches her content—classically sentimental, clear, and melancholic prose concerning a group of people who have taken to the land in Kansas. Maturation, family, death, all on a farm. I think it's *romans a clef*, because there are accompanying pictures. If Cindy Crabb only read Alice Munro for a long time it might result in this. Ruminative and satisfying. —Dave Brainwreck (pioneerspress.com)

JERK STORE #13, \$?, 5 1/2" x 8 1/4", copied, 32 pgs.

Super tough-looking new issue of *Jerk Store*. All the text was typed on a typewriter and scanned in. Alex states he did this so he wouldn't spend endless hours re-writing stuff. It also looks really punk. For those who haven't checked it out, *Jerk Store* is an Australian zine that isn't specific to one subgenre. This issue features an interview with Finnish anarcho-punk band 1981, an Australian tour diary written by the drummer of Daylight Robbery, some gritty writing by Traffic Street head honcho Sam North, and a dozen or so record reviews. Compared to previous issues, this issue has an almost Revolution Summer feel to it, or maybe the cover just reminds me of old Dischord ads. Either way, you can always depend on *Jerk Store* to follow through. Both in its approach to music, and its attention to detail. Do you like CBDS and The Partisans? If so, this zine is waiting for you. —Daryl (PO Box 284, Maylands, WA 6931, Australia)

LUNA IN TUNA #7, \$2 or trade, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", copied, 12 pgs.

There wasn't any contact info in this issue of *Luna in Tuna*, despite it being one in an established series of zines, but a quick internet dig-around reveals that Reena of *LIT* is one of the amigos in Three Amigos Press, the zine power trio loosely based in Long Beach. That in and of itself is an endorsement of this zine, but I'm going to go on. Reena's zine is a perzine in the sense that you get a really good idea of the kind of person she is when you're done reading, but instead of being done

obscure surf bands both live and recorded. It also features an excellent little article titled "Start a Surf Band, You Hoser" that has eight handy steps towards rippin' (number four being "Fight the other surf bands in town"), as well as handy surf scales to get your guitarist going. Judging from the first issue of *Maximum Tremolo*, surf clearly equals punk. —Alanna Why (Maximum Tremolo, PO Box 467, Amherst, NY 14226)

PROFANE EXISTENCE #64, \$2 U.S. ppd., \$4 Can. ppd.,

11 1/2" x 17", newsprint, 36 pgs.

Nearly forty pages' worth of assorted content collected from the Profane Existence blog—all of the columns and interviews herein were originally published online in 2012 or 2013. I admit that I've never been a constant follower of this punk monolith. Frankly, my personal existence can hardly be considered profane, and it's been a while since I've paid much attention to most bands on the brutal/crusty/illegible patches end of the spectrum. But it's a mistake to think of *Profane Existence* as a one-dimensional entity, and I found it more relevant to my tastes in this issue than I would have guessed from the rotting corpse pictured on the cover. Mixed in with the requisite Neurosis and Misery pieces are interviews with punks from all walks of life, from animal rights activists to rural farmers to illustrators and photographers, along with dozens of columns on as many topics. Not every one is a slam dunk, but with this much content available, there's bound to be something interesting to practically any kind of punk. The words are densely packed, information crammed into every inch of the full-size spread, and I can't imagine reading this cover-to-cover in one sitting any more than I would the *Wall Street Journal* (all right, it's a little more likely than that). As with most publications of the punk-as-fuck and finger-staining variety, this could also stand some more stringent copyediting here and there—though an editor's note preemptively advises me to "shut [my] fucking hole" about that. But as a vast and easily accessible resource for all manner of punk-related writing, this is certainly worth at least a good flip-through. —Indiana Laub (Profane Existence, PO Box 18051, MPLS, MN 55418, profaneexistence.com)

RABBIT, RABBIT, RABBIT #2, \$2, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", copied, 36 pgs.

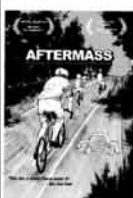
Inspired, jazzed-up zine from a guy in rural Wisconsin who frequently makes the trek to Milwaukee. A lot of band profiles, show anecdotes, and reviews of weird shit (noodle soup, donuts, the new Unfun record), as well as some enthusiastic and heartfelt personal anecdotes about small town life. My biggest issue with *Rabbit x 3* is that it sometimes succumbs to the usual early-issue pratfalls: pages in weird/questionable

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order, margins cutting words off, handwriting sometimes being difficult to decipher. Still, Colin's enthusiastic and asking a lot of good questions. I'd be interested to read more of his writing without the layout hampering things. —Keith Rosson (Colin, 654 Highlandview Dr., West Bend, WI 53095)

RADVOCATE, THE v. 2, #11, \$2, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", copied, 40 pgs.

This zine is also "an unsponsored platform for writers, artists, and poets to submit their work to," but advertising themselves as a spot for non-pros does not translate into a sub-par zine. This issue features poetry, color photography, comics / illustrated narratives, book reviews, music reviews, a six-word memoir, and experimental fiction and is superbly edited to include a good mix of work and a high level of quality. Ten stars! —Bianca (Ayahuasca Publishing, 3245 University Ave., Ste. 1430, San Diego CA 92104, theradvocateisamagazine.com)

RENATE #19, €6.45, 8 1/2" x 11", copied, 24 pgs.

The theme of this German-based international comics anthology is the "end of the teenage years." Some of the artists are incredible (e.g. Crippa Almquist) and none are terrible. Reading comics in another language, especially short, four-panel ones, is fun—there are a million ways to guess at the words based on the visual cues, and I enjoyed doing that more than I enjoyed the ones staged in English. And I enjoyed the ones in English! —Dave Brainwreck (bibliothek@renatecomics.de)

SAL SI PUEDES #4, \$2, 8 1/2" x 11", glossy, 72 pgs.

Double issue of a glossy zine about life in City Terrace, East L.A. Between the full-page neighborhood portraits are rambling writings, including an affecting tale of long-term angel dust abuse in the writer's family. Comes with a crazy MP3 disc of snippets from movies and old TV ads, powerviolence, lowrider soul, and more. The eclectic CD sums up the feel of the whole project, like walking in on a fiery conversation at three AM. —Chris Terry (PO Box 227237, LA, CA 90022)

SHORT FAST & LOUD #27, \$2, 8 1/2" x 11", newsprint, 64 pgs.

Rad newsprint zine that appears to be run by survivors of the '90s powerviolence scene. They hit just the right vibe of remaining passionate about the music that they love without coming off as stunted or myopic. Interviews with Infest and Backslider, plus a shitload of record reviews. Drummer extraordinaire Dave Witte even reviews craft beer. —Chris Terry (sixweeksrecords.com)

STOWAWAYS, THE #15, \$2, 8 1/2" x 11", copied, 20 pgs.

A guy's life, mainly told through the shows that he goes to. It's all there, from packed fest to empty room. "We took the 91 to the 55 to the 405, exited at Euclid, parked at the Costco, walked across the street, walked down the bike path to the bottom of the riverbed, and sat under the bridge waiting for the show to start." —Chris Terry (fuckthestowaways.blogspot.com)

TALES FROM THE WILL, \$2, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", copied, 16 pgs.

This zine is essentially a lyric book for New York horror punk band The Will. I did not know that before I read it, so I processed it as a poetry zine, but with poetry about one of my favorite subjects: horror movies. I'm tempted to never listen to The Will. If the music sucks, it will ruin this zine for me, and I love this zine. I've seen a lot of lyrics about horror movies. They are always fun, but they're not always good. These are good. They are not mere summaries of what happens in the movies. They add new twists and turns, funny little insights about, for example, the conflict between the cannibals in the basement in *The People under the Stairs* and the kids who stumble into the cannibal lair. Some of the pieces actually combine different movies. *C.H.U.D.* vs. *Raw Meat*? Great combination. They also get bonus points for digging deeper than the *Evil Dead* movies. There are too many songs about those movies already. This zine features pieces about two David Cronenberg movies and, my favorite of the bunch, *Blood Diner*! This is highly recommended for fans of weird zines and horror. —MP Johnson (facebook.com/thewillnyc)

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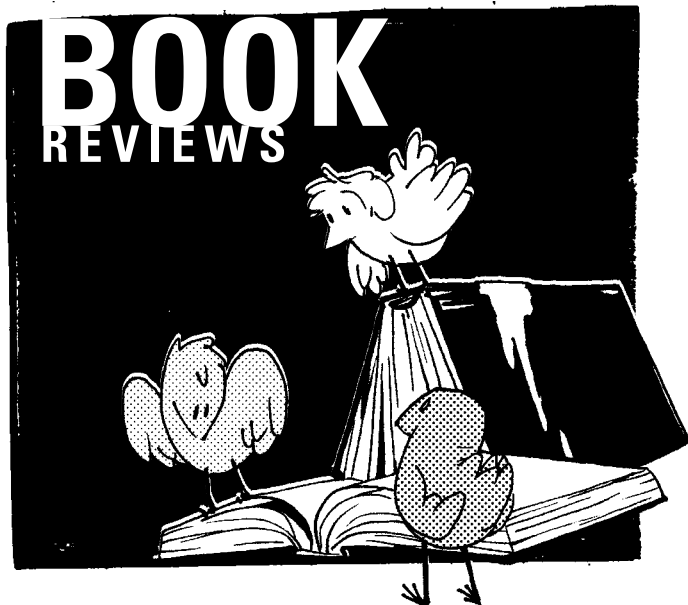
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Alone Forever: The Singles Collection

By Liz Prince, 104 pgs.

Gonna say it up front: I've had a crush on Liz Prince for at least three years, ever since my ex-boyfriend got me *Would You Still Love Me If I Wet the Bed?* for Christmas. I've always admired her straightforward style, her honesty, and willingness to look like a total weirdo. As a fellow tomboy lady attempting to sidestep the awkwardness of dating punk rock dudes, Liz's tales of rejection, self-deprecation, and nights alone with her cats hit a tender

relatable and understandable to bordering on fantastical. It was such an abrupt turn that I couldn't help but wonder if the latter half of the story was a dream or an alternate reality.

I read a lot—usually non-fiction—so I'm not always the best at picking up on ideas and themes in fiction. Thus, with the turn in *The League*, I know I missed something. I can't say that Allen did anything wrong. Some readers just pick this stuff up better than I do. But I really want to get it! And I can't help but wonder if there was anything Allen could've done to help less learned fiction readers like myself understand where he was going.

Regardless, the latter half of the book still kept me engaged and was well-written. I tore through *The League* in about a day. It's a fun, entertaining read, written by a guy with talent (and unlike many self-published books, it looks good and the editing is solid!). I'd definitely recommend picking up *The League*. —Kurt Morris (billupsallen.com)

Slash They Ass Up: A Black Punk Manifesto

By Yumii Thecato, 100 pgs.

Race and ethnicity are uncomfortable subjects, even for the punk community. It's often assumed that racism is dead, or that discussing race is like unearthing bones better left buried. Thecato says fuck that noise. He provides context, reassurance, and matter-of-fact solutions to the problems that plague the black community, but his arguments can be applied to all people of color.

The book is divided into topical chapters: "Ignorance," "Fun," "Self-Hate," and several others. In "Black Friends," Thecato states: "In order not to bring too much attention and danger to ourselves individually, a lot of us put things that are uncharacteristically black on reserve." As a subjugated minority, we are often forced to question our preferences as either being authentic taste or, rather, implanted by "white" society through societal pressure. Thecato provides an example from when he was in high school. A black classmate would hide his Dropkick Murphy and Slayer CDs for fear of not being accepted by his peers. Instead, if asked, he would publicly state that he listened to Nas or Ghostface Killah. This duality—a public and

"As a fellow tomboy lady, I've always admired her straightforward style, her honesty, and willingness to look like a total weirdo."

—Candice Tobin, *Alone Forever: The Singles Collection*

spot in my heart. She copes the way I cope, with boldness and sarcasm. Those methods don't always work out for us, but at least Liz got a great book out of it. —Candice Tobin (Top Shelf Productions, PO Box 1282 Marietta, GA 30061, topshelfcomix.com)

League, The

By Billups Allen, 192 pgs.

The League is a quick-moving story about Martin Selby, a twenty-something who has recently moved from the East Coast to a California college town in the desert. Trying to overcome social anxiety, obesity, and a shitty job, he eventually finds some relief in sumo wrestling with his new friend, Chuy. As Martin and Chuy get into sumo, they go to a tournament in Hawaii where things start coming apart for Martin.

The first half of *The League* proves to be an encouraging tale. Billups Allen does a fine job at making Martin a relatable character who has his share of problems. The issues of anxiety and battling with weight are things that many people can relate to, and I wondered how much of the author was in Martin because he did such a good job at characterizing him. As Martin found friends and got into sumo, it was satisfying to see him grow and gain confidence.

The descriptions painted by the author were great. I could picture how dreary the college town in the desert was. The portrayal of Martin's apartment further added to his depressive environment. I also enjoyed learning about something like sumo, which I didn't know anything about before. It was easy to understand how much this activity meant to Martin and Chuy.

I did, however, find the significant change that occurs later in Hawaii—and the material after it—was a bit harder to follow. It gets much darker and Martin's story—while not necessarily a bad choice—went from being

private persona—plague all people of color. We are often confronted with the dilemma of ostracizing ourselves with our ethnic peers versus acceptance of our personal predilections. I fundamentally believe that this is where punk should fit in.

Ideally, punk should provide a home for misfits, goofballs, weirdos, outsiders, and anyone unable to fit into the cookie-cutter mold of the majority. Yet, as Thecato points out, the punk community isn't immune to ignorance, it is still full of racial assumptions and slurs. In the end, we are judged by the most grievous mistakes by those in our community (punks in blackface, unconscious biases, the blatant co-opting of another culture). Yet, the fact that this book and *Razorcake* should exist is a testament to the continuing dialogue involved in punk education. Ultimately, Thecato seeks to detect bullshit and create a supportive dialogue for people of color.

The only ding against this book is that some paragraphs require multiple readings and re-readings because of choppy language and poor grammar. Although Thecato's voice is engaging and friendly, cleaning up each chapter would have made each argument more succinct. Regardless, these types of books need to exist for the benefit of everyone involved in our community and for those in need of the honesty found inside. —Sean Arenas (Slash 'Em Up Press, slashtheyassup@gmail.com)

Wages So Low You'll Freak (a.k.a Pudd'nhead #6)

By Mike Pudd'nhead, 197 pgs.

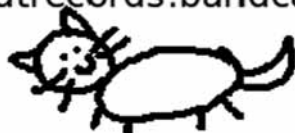
The synopsis of this book makes some pretty lofty claims. It says, "this is the story of the four years I spent trying to organize a union at Jimmy John's. It contains sex, drugs, and violence. It also contains blood, sweat, and tears. The characters are communist, anarchists, and liberals. They are also punk rockers, hip hoppers, and bike nerds. So it's pretty much the hottest

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book out there.” I’m not sure I’d buy all that if I was given the choice; one thing I *can* tell you is I wouldn’t buy the book. Like many, I was seriously burned by political activism in my younger days and it’s left me pretty jaded about such topics. However, since it was sent to me for review, I crossed my fingers the blurb was true and this book wasn’t as dry, boring, and defeating as literature of a political nature usually is. I was in luck—while unavoidably monotonous at times, due to it being about daily organizing—it was never dry and far from boring.

Mike Pudd’nhead is a *zine* writer and while *Wages* is a full-length and perfect-bound book, he also calls it issue six of his *zine*. And it’s classic *zine* writer pluck that makes this story interesting. It’s his tone, simultaneously self-deprecating, slightly cocky, and always humorous, that makes this tale rise above a dull, alienating, play-by-play with the powers that be. Mike doesn’t come off as an insecure career activist, he’s just a pissed-off sandwich slappy at a really crappy job. He and a few coworkers have enough of shitty working conditions, get with the Industrial Workers of the World, and attempt the first fast food worker’s union in history. And it seems like a damn hard job, though, not nearly as degrading, dehumanizing, or hazardous as working at Jimmy John’s, a company who forces employees to come in sick, make cycle deliveries in snow and ice in below zero cold, and have wages set at \$6.75 with no chance of a raise.

He tells all, beginning with the IWW playbook strategy of talking to each worker “one-on-one” about their grievances to get them on board. He does this by hitting them up at bars or blacked out at parties. Eventually, strategy meetings are had. Morale-building Jimmy John’s union-sponsored bike races are run. Shows by bands made up of Jimmy John’s employees are thrown. But, seriously, *he tells all*.

Each chapter begins with an italicized paragraph of a journal entry where he talks about getting too wasted and getting in fights, hitting on potential union members, or saying condescending shit to people who don’t sign up as quick as he’d like. Choosing to include these journal entries, still written as if they happened the night before, shows a God-I-wanna-slap-him humanity and a sad, youthful fallibility that gets in the way of the his and the people’s vision. After heading the chapter that way, he elucidates, giving the reader the full details with the wisdom of hindsight. It’s a smart move, but I bring the entries up as an example of Mike’s honesty and thus his ability to bring the personal into the story. It becomes not a story of grandstanding or displaced Protestant work ethic, but one of the relationships that make for resistance, clues to how it can be achieved, or perhaps why it fails over and over again.

“I felt like I was retreating from the scene to do union work,” Mike says, “but in reality our JJ’s union could never exist outside of ‘the scene.’ The entire city was going to hear about it, and their support or disdain would in turn affect our ability to organize. We weren’t operating outside the scene—we were just creating a new sub-community within our larger community. A community based on the principles of solidarity and fighting the bosses.”

Mike’s cognitive dissonance here lends to some of the warmest moments of his book, showing how the personal and the political become intertwined. For instance, when the bosses hire union busters, they tried to separate the workers along age, race, and class lines. They implied that the mostly white organizers are privileged students working for excess drinking money who don’t care about their jobs, but the union often succeeded in bringing people together through poker games, parties, or simply mutual aid. When the bosses handed out anti-union buttons employees smashed them on the floor in front of them.

Mike cutting his teeth writing his personal *zines* has granted him the ability to tell this story without couching it corpse-mouthed academia, but one full of life and humanity as it moves toward its very heartbreaking end. —Craven Rock (\$7 ppd. to Mike Pudd’nhead, PO Box 7458, MPLS, MN 55407, mikepuddnhead@gmail.com or rabbledistro.com, store.iww.org, microcosmpublishing.com)

Woman Rebel: The Margaret Sanger Story

By Peter Bagge, 104 pgs.

After the seminal slacker comic *Hate* was essentially wrapped up, comic artist Peter Bagge began releasing *Hate Annual*, a fun magazine with only a few *pages* dedicated to following *Hate*’s main character Buddy Bradley as he stumbles through life. The bulk of the pages of *Hate Annual* are dedicated to compiling bits of Bagge’s magazine work along with articles and comics on topics that strike his fancy. Getting to know Bagge better through *Hate Annual* gives a lot of insight as to why he was so good at capturing a certain point and time in the lives of young people struggling to maintain relationships and coming to terms with their interest in nostalgia. Bagge has a knack for making real life out of history.

In his latest book, Bagge puts the life and controversy surrounding activist Margaret Sanger’s extensive struggle to educate people about birth control. Bagge’s rubbery drawing style and uncanny capacity with dialogue brings history to life without excessive dramatic embellishment. The ups and downs of Bagge’s take on Sanger’s life construct a person pushing blindly through a difficult and imbalanced society, winning all the victories and making all the mistakes that would cause her to be reviled and cause her to be seen as a hero. It’s a human story, which is Bagge’s greatest attribute as a historian: whether he’s writing about pop musicians or historical figures, he’s aware that he’s writing about people. During a time when the biopic is required to turn subject matter into Greek mythology and internet complainers trash a person because they don’t like a song, Bagge’s unique take on the world is more important than ever. Even bigger-than-life characters such as H.G. Wells and Mahatma Gandhi come across as people you might run into at the supermarket. Well, a really weird supermarket, maybe. —Billups Allen (*Drawn And Quarterly*; drawnandquarterly.com)



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Dragon City: Punk Rock in China: DVD

For whatever reason, the back cover gave me the mistaken impression that this was a documentary about the Chinese punk band No Name, with the camera dude following them around to show us decadent, unappreciative Westerners all the shit a punk band has to endure to tour—or, hell, to even exist in—China. Not so. It’s actually a work of fiction. To wit, four hardy, young lads, living the usual hardscrabble existence of the post-apocalypse ((and, since it’s post-apocalyptic China, we just assume that it’s even worse than, like, post-apocalyptic Canada or somewhere, which is probably true, because they have cannibals with luchador masks and meat cleavers who hunt people down in the street for food, whereas Canada would just have people arguing over donuts)) come across an expat American who is sorta like a cross between George Carlin and Stan Lee, and lives in what he claims is the last fully-functional nightclub on earth, Dragon City. Since one of the four has an acoustic guitar on which he occasionally plays baleful melodies, George/Stan talks him and the rest of the merry gang into playing music on his fully equipped stage ((I wonder what kinda monitor mix one gets after the apocalypse? I suppose not much different from what ya get today, come to think of it)). The guys immediately develop instant proficiency and launch into a few of their passable-if-Fat-Wreckish songs, which rouse the downtrodden spirits of the miscellaneous kindred lowlifes in the neighborhood. George/Stan takes ill and dies, and the band plays a few more songs, secure in the knowledge that their gift of music is the one spark of hope in an otherwise sparkless scenario. The movie is done in under forty minutes, which is, to be truthful, about the right running time for it. The rest of the DVD is filled out with music videos and live clips—earlier stuff like

"Smash Everything" has a certain raw, Chaotic Discord-esque charm; later stuff like "My Attitude" just sounds like some lame Poison power ballad or something ((note to band: In English, the word "take" is not pronounced the same as George Takei's last name. But I agree it's much cooler your way!)). I'd say that, as far as the forty-minute movie serving the purpose of getting me interested enough in the band that I watched the rest of their videos, mission accomplished. As regards Asian punk movies, however, *Wild Zero* this ain't. —Rev. Nørb (MVD Visual, mvdvisual.com)

Only the Young and Tchoupitoulas: DVD

This double-disc set contains two documentaries from Oscilloscope Laboratories. The films are set on opposite sides of the country, but their themes of adolescent innocence and exploration draw them together.

Only the Young is, first and foremost, beautifully shot. Lens flares twinkle between lingering shots of drainage ditches and abandoned houses, and everything seems washed out in a soft desert haze. The filmmakers' portrayal of suburban Southern California is heavily nostalgic, but not necessarily inaccurate. Speaking of nostalgia, the lanky skate punks at the center of the documentary bear signifiers familiar to anyone who grew up "alternative" in an era of mass-produced punk artifacts: crisp embroidered patches, streaks of hair dye, that one "Out of Step" T-shirt every record store carries. Garrison, Kevin, and Skye are as recognizable as any kid I knew in tenth grade. Many of the moments they share are so perfectly candid and graceful that it isn't immediately clear whether or not they are scripted. Nonetheless, this isn't a structured narrative about the pain of growing up or the triumphs of disaffected youth over suburban conformity. *Only the Young* is more of an intimate teenage diary, offering glimpses of tentative relationships, half-completed projects, and the first unnerving pangs of adulthood. Unfortunately, the film's power is hampered by some awkward hiccups in pacing and emphasis, but the overall effect is sweet, honest, and tastefully subdued.

Like its companion film, *Tchoupitoulas* is less formal documentary than immersive portrait. It follows three young brothers on a night's journey into New Orleans.

William, the youngest, emerges as our curious protagonist. He races behind his brothers, indifferent to their exasperation with his mile-a-

minute questions. The camera follows over his shoulder and documents the sights and sounds of the city: gaudy costumes, street evangelists, fire spinners, sidewalk vendors, tourists in matching T-shirts, and, of course, live music—on every other corner, spilling out of bars and clubs, drifting out of open windows. The experience of watching *Tchoupitoulas* is as close to tramping through the French Quarter as it gets without actually doing it. The bustling city scenes are divided by intervals of dreamlike quiet in which William muses on topics including his dream careers (football player, lawyer, architect, in succession), what he would do if he could be twenty-one forever (stay on the phone all night and ride around in Lamborghinis), and the beautiful girl he's ever seen (his friend's girlfriend). Barely even on the brink of adolescence, William is as earnest and charming a guide an audience could hope for.

At a little over an hour apiece, these two documentaries make a resonant and well-matched pair. Though set in vastly different landscapes, both curate the experiences of their subjects without commenting on them or forcing a narrative. They aim instead for the sincerity of real moments. It's a lofty goal, and one that each film happily achieves. —Indiana Laub (Oscilloscope Laboratories, PO Box 20090, 527 Hudson St., NY, NY 10014, oscilloscope.net)

Punk in Africa: DVD

This documentary profiles the various punk bands that sprung from South Africa's tumultuous political climate during the '70s up until now. Pioneers such as Wild Youth, National Wake, and The Genuines braved harsh police repercussions just to play their instruments for some eager ears. These bands represent the radical politics, interracial communion, and discontent of Africa's youth. The directors, Keith Jones and Deon Maas, do an excellent job of providing the historical background from which these bands arose and a lot of insights are finessed from the interviewees. *Punk in Africa* is an awe-inspiring film that confirms that punk, in its essence, functions most potently as a protest device and as a means to liberate a radical consciousness. Highly recommended. —Sean Arenas (punkinafrica.com)



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